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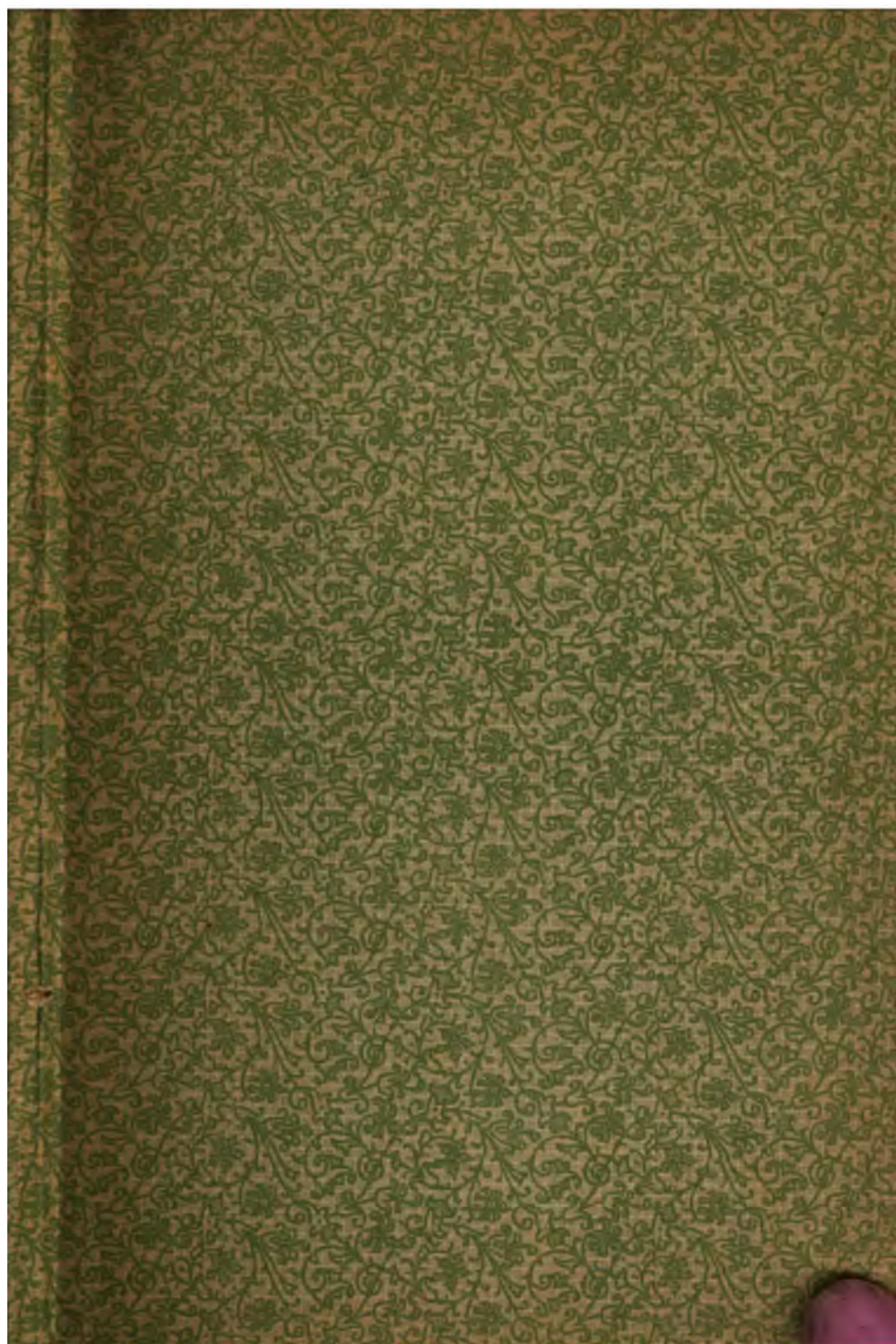
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JAMES McCOSH, D.D., LL.D., LITT.D.,

*Ex-President of Princeton College.*

AUTHOR OF "METHOD OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT;"

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**GOSPEL SERMONS.**



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## GOSPEL SERMONS.

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### THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE.

I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts (living creatures), and in the midst of the elders, stood a lamb as it had been slain. — REV. v. 6.

WE learn from the first chapter of the Book of Revelation that the Apostle John, while an exile on the isle of Patmos, was carried up by the Spirit on the Lord's day into the immediate presence of God and the host of heaven. The visions which passed before him were grander and more sublime than were ever portrayed by the pen of the poet or pencil of the painter. He sees an exalted and awful throne, surrounded by angels and saints and innumerable living and immortal beings; and he hears the music from the harp of angels mingling with the thunders issuing from the throne of God, and the very voice of the Almighty, as it were the voice of many waters. Having surveyed this scene for a time in mute astonishment, his attention is called—as we read in the beginning of this chapter—to a mysterious book, written on the back and sealed with seven seals;

being evidently the book of God's decrees, containing the evolutions of Providence and the wonders of redemption. A strong angel is heard asking with a loud voice which fills heaven and earth, Who is worthy to open this book? An awful pause ensues. No one in heaven or earth or throughout the wide universe is able for the task, and John weeps over the incapacity of the creation. While thus desponding, he is addressed by one of the elders who dwell near the throne, and is told of one able for the mighty work. He turns up his eyes to see; and what does he behold? Is it a grand and imposing sight fitted to overpower and prostrate the mind? Is it a splendid throne or a dazzling light, or as he saw on another occasion the mightiest of the angels clothed with the sun? No; as he looks up he sees an image of gentleness and of meekness, of weakness and of death. The object presented in the very midst of the throne was a lamb, as it had been slain. "I beheld, and lo! in the very midst of the throne stood a lamb as it had been slain."

In this book the veil which separates the future from the past, the other world from this, is partially withdrawn, and we have shown to us a succession of views or pictures of the land that is afar off. Now, it is a noteworthy circumstance that in every one of these descriptions the same object is presented,—a lamb, and a lamb as it had been slain. In the verses immediately succeeding, when one who had interposed when no other was able for the work, took the book in order to open it, a company of the heavenly

inhabitants, the four creatures of life, and the four and twenty elders, representing evidently the redeemed, fall down in adoration, and they fall down before the lamb. John hears the worship which they pay; they ascribe praise to him, as one that had been slain. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Forthwith the whole angelic host join the anthem. "I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; and they said with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches." The praise becomes louder and still wider, till "every creature that is in heaven, and upon the earth, and under the earth, and which are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever." Again, in the seventh chapter the apostle obtains a lively view of the blessed inhabitants of heaven. "I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues;" and who are they? They stood before the throne and before the lamb. He hears their praise; it is to the same blessed object, — "salvation to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb." A question is put as to the past history of those who now stand in white robes and in the enjoyment of ineffable bliss, and it is answered that "they have washed their robes,

and made them white in the blood of the lamb." He sees them in the enjoyment of perfect happiness. "They hunger no more, neither thirst any more," and the reason, "because the lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters." In the fourteenth chapter, John looks, and lo! a lamb stood on Mount Zion, and with him a great multitude harping with their harps; and who are they, and whence their joy? They are "they that follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth." In the twenty-first chapter we have a lengthened description of the holy city prepared for the saints. Its walls are of jasper, high and deep, with twelve foundations. The streets and dwellings are of pure gold, with a foundation of precious stones; its gates are pearls, and its watchmen are angels. But these do not separately or conjointly constitute the glory of heaven; its chief ornament is its temple, and "the Lord God Almighty and the lamb are the temple of it" These impart to it its chief grandeur and glory. "The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine on it: for the glory of God enlightens it, and the lamb is the light thereof."

The question naturally presses upon us: Why, when we look up to heaven, do we find the same object pressed on us,—a lamb, and a lamb as it had been slain? Let us, in humble dependence on the Divine blessing, gather from the vision the lessons it is fitted to convey.

I.

The vision is set before us to remind us of the method of atonement; it is by the blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Amid all the error abounding in this world there are few or none so infatuated as to maintain that they have not committed sin. I take up the admission that sin has been committed, and I require an answer to the question, How is this sin to be forgiven? Most assuredly God has seen the sin, and he cannot see it without condemning it. How, then, is an offended God to be pacified? Sin is the violation of a law which all must acknowledge to be holy, just, and good. How is this law to be satisfied? The law, representing the law-giver, has pronounced its sentence. How is this sentence to be removed? Let us have a direct, a clear and satisfactory answer to these questions,—or rather to the question, for the question is one.

By our repentance and reformation, may possibly be the reply. Let the sinner, you say, mourn over his sins and abandon them. Now, in regard to the view presented in this answer, it can be shown, in the first place, that down till such time as there is reconciliation with God and a work of grace upon the heart, there can be no genuine repentance, no godly reformation. There may be feelings of remorse and regret;

but these are not penitence. There may be conduct praiseworthy enough in itself; but when the law of God is brought to bear upon it, it will be found lamentably defective in the nature of it, or the spirit and motives from which it springs. Waters will not gush out from the rock of our hearts till it is struck by the very power of God. But granting for the sake of argument that man could of himself wring out a true repentance, still it can be shown, in the second place, that there is nothing in that repentance to make atonement for past sin. Repentance, if thorough and spiritual, might stand for itself, but can make no atonement for the neglect of other duties which we acknowledge to be binding upon us. Let it be observed that repentance in many cases cannot repair the injury which the sin has entailed. In no case can it make any amends to the insulted justice of God. Can we conceive of God, the moral governor of the universe, and to be finally its judge, proclaiming throughout his boundless dominions that his creatures may break his commandments and inflict the direst evil, and continue to do so as long as they please, and that upon a simple profession of penitence all their offences will be instantly forgiven? It requires but a moment's reflection to discover that such a method of procedure were most unworthy of a holy God, and fitted to throw the universe into inextricable confusion. And how, then, I still ask, is this sin which you confess to be forgiven?

Perhaps you now say that you trust in the mercy of God. The answer is nearer the truth; but if it goes no farther, it is still far distant from it. You trust, you say, in the mercy of God; but how is this mercy to be exercised? Mercy is not the sole perfection of God. Holiness which leads him to hate sin, justice by which he guards his law and supports his government, — these are as essential to his nature as benevolence. Nature itself teaches this, and shows in the works of God the storm as well as the calm, the lightning, swift emblem of his vengeance, as well as the sunshine, the symbol of his love; decay and disease, disappointment and death, scarcely less prevalent than health and happiness. And when we go to the Word it tells us expressly that God “is of purer eyes than to behold evil;” that “he cannot look on iniquity,” and that “he will by no means clear the guilty.” How, then, can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly? Human reason can give no intelligent, no satisfactory answer to this question. All investigations only conduct into ever-thickening darkness and gloom, in which fears and doubts have their appropriate dwelling-place. Who is worthy to open this sealed book and unfold this mystery? When this question is put, all creation is perplexed and silent. “The depth saith It is not in me.” Reason acknowledges that the problem is too high for it to solve. The thoughtful mind is not satisfied till it hears God himself proclaim, “Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.” The anxious

spirit would weep like John till such time as it sees the Lion of the tribe of Judah take the book and break the seals. The mind feels that it has nothing to rest on; no truth on which the understanding can settle and the heart repose, till such time as it sees "a lamb as it had been slain, in the very midst of the throne of God."

It is under this aspect that God is presented to the sinner everywhere throughout the Scriptures as a holy God, extending mercy to sinners through the sufferings of his Son. In the first promise to fallen man, the seed of the woman who was to put his heel on the head of the serpent is described as having his heel bruised as he does so. In the first worship of fallen man there is the offering of a bleeding lamb. You might have discovered the wandering path of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the altars which they built and the smoke of the sacrifices which they offered. Under the law, almost all things were purified by blood. The grand object presented in the New Testament is a bleeding Saviour suspended upon the cross. It is thus the same view that is presented to us under the patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian dispensations. Except in the degree of development, there is no difference between God as revealed in Eden, in Sinai, and on Calvary; between God as described in the books of Moses, and God as described so many centuries later in the writings of Paul and of John. In the garden we have the law given, and indications, too, of one coming to

deliver from the penalty. On Mount Sinai there is a law delivered amid thunderings and lightnings, but also ordinances which tell of an atonement for sin. In the mysterious transactions on Calvary there is an awful forsaking and a fearful darkness, emblematic of the righteousness and indignation of God, as well as a melting tenderness in the words of our Lord breathing forgiveness and love, and telling of an opened paradise: "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." The first book of Scripture discloses to us, near its commencement, a worshipper offering a lamb in sacrifice; and the last shows a lamb as it had been slain, in the midst of the throne of God.

Taking the views thus presented to us in the volume of the Word, we cannot look up to heaven without discovering this significant object, showing that there is infinite mercy in God, and reminding us of the way in which this mercy is dispensed. With such a prospect, no sinner need despair, for that lamb was slain for sinners; and with such a prospect, no saint dare be proud or presumptuous, for it is through the sufferings of that lamb that the saint has attained his privileges. The object is represented as placed in the very midst of the throne of God, that man may never look up to heaven without seeing it; and that the saint on earth may join the saint in heaven in ascribing the glory of their salvation to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb that was slain.

## II.

The vision is set before us to remind us of the character of Jesus, of his meekness and gentleness, so fitted to win the human heart.

Under the former head, assuming that all men have sinned, I put the question, How is this sin to be forgiven? Under this head I assume a corresponding fact and put a corresponding question. Assuming what no one who is acquainted with his own heart will deny, that man is alienated from God, I ask, How is his heart to be won? The question under the last head was, How is God to be reconciled to man? The question under this head is, How is man to be reconciled to God? How is his confidence to be won and his heart engaged?

First, I remark that in order to the gaining of the feelings of the heart it is needful that the conscience be pacified. A troubled conscience always leads the mind to avoid, as if instinctively, the remembrance of the party offended. Having given offence to God, our inclination would be to avoid him; at times to flee from him, as Cain did, as Jonah did, from the presence of the Lord. There cannot be true and filial love in a mind in which conscience has not been appeased, nor can there be any of those allied graces, such as faith and confidence, hope and joy, which ought to fill and animate the soul. The appeasing of the conscience is an indispensable preliminary to

the flowing out of the affections towards God. Not only so, but in order to gain the heart there must be a free, a full, and an instant forgiveness. It must be free; for it cannot be purchased or earned by us. It must be full; for if anything were left unforgiven, the conscience would still reproach, and the soul would so far be in a state of irritation, enmity, and rebellion. It must be instant; otherwise the mind, still without peace, would not be disposed to confidence and affection. Nothing short of this will allay its tossings and its waves, and allow the image of God, who is love, to be reflected on the bosom.

Besides the instinctive aversion which it excites towards God, an evil conscience must ever—it may be unconsciously—be a source of irritation; and when the soul is not at peace with God it cannot be at peace with itself. Instead of love, peace, and trust, there will be divers lusts and passions raging fiercely and uncontrolled. We say, “Peace, peace! but there is no peace.” How can there be peace when the soul is not at peace with its Maker? When the waves of the ocean are raging, how are we to subdue them? We may try to do this by commanding them, only to find that they do not obey us any more than they did Canute; but let the winds of heaven cease, and there will soon be a calm. So let God be pacified towards us, let him say, “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” showing that his anger is turned away, then the conscience ceases to lash, and the thoughts and feelings compose themselves into quiet and assur-

ance, — as when the winds of heaven are stilled, the waves of the ocean do rock themselves to rest.

Observe how all this is secured in the very view here presented to our faith. The lamb, the image of gentleness, in the very midst of the throne, shows that God is pacified, and the blood that flows from it proves that this has been done in strict accordance with justice. The conscience, the law in the heart, is satisfied, for God himself, the law-giver, is satisfied. The believer, as he looks to the object set up, can say, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"

But secondly, in order to gain the heart there must be a lovely object presented to it. Such an object is presented in Jesus, a lamb as it had been slain.

The character of our Lord, set forth as an object on which the faith and affection of mankind may rest, has in itself everything that is grand and attractive. Just as there is a beauty of shape and color that pleases the eye, and a sweetness of sound that delights the ear, so there is a moral loveliness that should draw towards it the affections of the soul. But here, in the character of God set forth in the face of his Son, we have all kinds of beauty meeting and harmoniously blending. The excellences to be found partially in the creature, being the reflections of his perfections, all meet and are infinite in Him. And there is *that* in the person and character of the object displayed to our contemplation and love which

endears him yet more to the heart. There is something in the very idea of an infinite God that is calculated to overawe and overpower the spirit of weak and sinful man. In every age of the world's history man has been afraid to look on the dazzling purity of God. Pained by the contemplation, he has been at infinite pains to carnalize a spiritual God and to embody him in symbol: in brute symbol among the ancient Egyptians, or in the more powerful works of inanimate nature, the sun, moon, and stars, as among the Persians, and in an image made with hands among the Greeks and Romans. Man has ever been carnalizing God and thereby degrading him; but here is a God incarnate without being degraded. In the Mediator the divine and human natures are united in such a manner that the one does not destroy or overpower the other, but each retains its own properties, while the whole is a unity. The brightness of the Father's glory, without being shorn of a single ray, is seen in Christ under a milder lustre. Coldness and indifference are dispelled when we think that in drawing near to Jesus it is man coming to man. Unbelief vanishes when we realize that we have a brother's heart beating for us on the throne of glory.

While our hearts are naturally drawn by sentiments and sympathies towards every brother man, there are certain men or classes of men towards whom we are attracted with greater force; as for instance towards all whose sensibilities are quick and whose feelings are tender. And if the persons have themselves

been in trouble, if their heart has been melted and softened by fiery trial, our hearts go towards them in yet fuller assurance. Disposed at all times to love such, we are especially drawn towards them when we ourselves are in trouble. Whoever may feel for us, we are sure *they* will feel for us; and we pour our complaints into their ears in the certainty of meeting with a hearing ear and a sympathetic heart.

It is by this attracting power that believers are drawn so closely to their Saviour. The brotherliness of his human nature as well as the holy love of his divine nature are brought out before us in almost every incident of his life. We recollect how he fed the hungry and healed all manner of diseases; how he restored the young man whose dead body was being carried out of the gates of the city of Nain to the embraces of his widowed mother, and wept over the grave of Lazarus; and we run to him as one ready to feel for us under all our trials. We remember how he was acquainted with grief, in its multiplied and diversified forms in body and in spirit, inflicted by man and by God; how he was often an hungered, without home or where to lay his head; how the tongue of calumny was raised against him, and the finger of scorn pointed at him; how the favors he conferred were met by no corresponding gratitude; how an apostle betrayed him, and the rulers of his country condemned him; and the people with loud voice demanded his crucifixion, wagged their heads, and reviled him in the midst of his dying agonies;

and when we think of this we feel that there is no sorrow of ours which he will not commiserate. The friendless rejoice, for they have a friend in him. The helpless take courage; their help is in him. The forsaken lift up their head and are comforted in communion with him who was himself forsaken.

Every one acquainted with man's nature knows that if his heart is gained it must be gained by love. It must be by presenting a loving object. Such is the loving object set before us, — a lamb as it had been slain, presented to the faith of the sinner that his heart through grace may be won and fixed forever.

### III.

The vision is set before us to remind us that Jesus is the grand source of joy to the saints in heaven. "The lamb that is in the midst of the throne feeds them," and "they follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth."

It is the view of Christ crucified, of the lamb as slain, that first gains the heart of the sinner. It is a view fitted to satisfy the soul, and the whole soul. It satisfies the conscience, for it exhibits God as satisfied by the atonement offered; and it satisfies the heart, for it discloses an object infinitely lovely in itself, and fitted to call forth the deepest and tenderest feelings.

As it was a view of this object that first gained the heart of the sinner, so it is a view of the same object seen in the visions of faith that continues to keep

and fix his regards. The faith that saves does not consist of a single glance; "looking unto Jesus" is the habitual attitude of the believer's soul. It is so far as he keeps his eye on this object that he has steadfastness and perseverance in the journey; and it is most interesting and encouraging to find that the object which first allured his heart when it was so wayward, and which fixed it, and thereby gave him constancy and consistency, reappears once more in heaven itself, to engage and satisfy the soul throughout eternity. That very light which so cheered the wanderer in the darkness, and gave him courage when he was ready to lie down and perish, is light that streams from his Father's house and his own home in heaven, and in which he is to rejoice forever. Death does no violence to such a one; it produces no break in his feelings and affections; it may separate him from some of the objects which he loves, but it draws him to the object which he mainly loves, which he loves with all his heart. It is indeed delightful to the believer to think that the friend who first visited him in his lost estate, and who guided him all the way through the wilderness, is the friend he is to meet with in the mansions above. Led to love the lamb of God when on earth, trained by the spirit of God and by all the dispensations of God to love him more and more, he finds when he has crossed the dark valley of the shadow of death that the first object that meets his eye, and the most conspicuous, is a lamb as it had been slain.

But we cannot utter that which is unutterable, or describe that which is indescribable; and so we cannot picture or so much as conceive of that joy unspeakable and full of glory which the believer feels on his first entering into the presence of his Saviour, and which he is to enjoy forever. The Word of God does not furnish us with any particular account of the holy exercises and joys of heaven, and for this silence two very excellent reasons can be given. One is that a vivid description of the felicities of heaven as fascinating the fancy might rather draw away the mind from the practical duties of life; and the other, that the enjoyments are such that man in his present state cannot so much as conceive them. Enough is revealed, however, to show that the lamb slain is to be the grand source of the happiness of the saints.

True, there will be enjoyments not flowing so directly, though still proceeding indirectly from him. There will be joys springing from the holy affections of confidence and love, which Christ by his spirit plants in the breasts of his people. These graces, flowing, overflowing, and ever increasing, will be a source of great and ever-deepening happiness throughout eternity. Again, there will be joys springing from the glorious society of heaven, from the company of saints and angels. Brethren in Christ, you are even now walking on the very road on which all the men of God have travelled, from the creation downwards; and at its termination you will meet with all those

who come from the east and from the west, from the north and the south, to sit down in the kingdom of God. They are out of every kindred, but they have all been made sons of God by adoption; out of every tongue, but they all unite with melody of voice and heart to sing praises to the Redeemer; out of every people, but now all kings and priests reigning under God and his anointed; out of every nation, but now all brought into the heavenly Canaan. Here you will meet with all the great and good who have lived from the time of the creation downwards. Are there times when you could have wished to converse with the patriarchs and prophets and others, the men of God who lived in divers ages? My friends, they have all met in the presence of God and of the lamb. Where else could you expect to meet them but at the fountains of wisdom and of grace? There Enoch, translated, still walks with God, but in closer fellowship. There Noah, escaped from a greater deluge than the deluge of waters,—the deluge of sin and death,—through Christ as the ark which God has provided, walks abroad on a new earth, and beholds a new heaven wherein dwelleth righteousness. There Abraham hath reached that city towards which he was all along travelling; and believers when they die are carried into Abraham's bosom. There Moses converses face to face with God, not in clouds and darkness as on Sinai's top, but in the sunshine of a better land than that which he was not allowed to visit when on earth. There the sweet psalmist of

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Israel is one of the choir of the redeemed, and joins his harp with the harp of angels. Or do you delight more to dwell on the characters of the apostles, or those who lived in New Testament times? There Paul, no longer in vision but in reality caught up into the third heavens, hears unspeakable words which it is not possible for man to utter, and dwells in the light of God,—not like the light which shone around him on the way to Damascus, but the light of God's countenance in which he rejoices forever. Here, too, the disciple of love may still lean on the bosom of Jesus and look up and behold him, not as he saw him on the cross, his face more marred than that of any man, but now glorified in heaven; and, no longer in mere vision, as at Patmos, behold the lamb as it had been slain, in the very midst of the throne of God. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." But here also, and above all and more precious, "ye are come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." The question has often been asked, Where is heaven? We may not be able to answer it geographically, but we can answer it truly. It is where Jesus is. "Where I am, there ye shall be also."

1. A man must be born again before he can enter the kingdom of God. The supposition has often

been put that the unconverted sinner be taken to heaven. Would he feel any comfort there, any desire to remain there? The very happiness that reigns there would, I believe, only impress him the more with his own misery; the holiness would be as painful to behold, as to gaze forever upon the full radiance of the noonday sun. Carry an unconverted sinner there, and I believe he would flee out of it, as of all places to him the most intolerable.

2. Oh that I had but lived in the days when Jesus sojourned on the earth! is the wish that will sometimes rise up in our breasts. Oh that I had but seen his sacred person! Oh, that I had but heard his gracious words! I would have followed him wherever he went; and then how blessed like Mary to sit at his feet and receive instruction from his lips! Ah, my friends, it may possibly be that these wishes and feelings resemble too much those of the Jews who lived in the days when Jesus was upon the earth. They declared that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would not have been guilty with them of the blood of the prophets. They garnished the tombs of the departed prophets, and they put to death a living prophet greater than them all. But these wishes, if proceeding from a sincere and sanctified heart, may yet be gratified. He who was dead is alive, and behold he liveth forevermore. As he was on earth, so is he now in heaven, as gentle, as loving as when he was curing the maladies of those who called on him, and comforting those who

THE LAMB IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE. 29

mourned; as full of sympathy as when he wept over the grave of Lazarus. Believers cherish the hope that they will be carried not in momentary vision, but in very truth, to that blessed place of which John had but a passing glimpse, and behold forever in the very midst of the throne a lamb as it had been slain.

## THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. — JOHN xiv. 6.

EVERY Christian knows that he is saved through Christ. But it behooves the believer to look to the full Christ as he is revealed to us, and not to view him exclusively under one aspect. Science tells us that there are three elements in light, — the illuminating power, the chemical power, and the heat power. So in him who is “the Light of the World” there is a threefold perfection. He here presents himself full-orbed: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Let us look to him first under these three aspects separately, and secondly as combining them.

### I.

#### THE TRUTHS SEPARATELY.

1. *Christ the Way.* — One of the deepest feelings in man's nature is a sense of want, — a want of something which this world is found not to supply. Ah, worldling, you feel that there is something unsatisfying in these very comforts and enjoyments of yours. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the

ear with hearing, nor the ambition with success, nor the lust with gratification. Ay, there is something wanting, and you know it; you feel it at times, though you may not yet know what it is that would fill the void.

It arises from sin, — no doubt of that, — from the terrible disruptions with the intervening chasms which sin has produced. But it can scarcely be called a sense of sin except at tempestuous times when the conscience arouses us as the heathen mariners did Jonah: "Arise, thou sleeper, and call upon thy God." And this awakening is apt to be only temporary, and we demand a little more sleep, a little more slumber, to find, however, that it is not the sleep which God gives his beloved, but a broken sleep with troubled dreams, and wakings up ever and anon, which make us long for unbroken rest without finding it.

What man especially needs to know is a way, — a way of access to the Father. "Show us the Father," said Philip; for it is natural to man to have some apprehension of God. Man is, alas! naturally a sinner; he is by nature practically ungodly, but he is not naturally an atheist. I enter here into no disputed philosophical speculations as to whether the idea of God is or is not innate. What I maintain is, that, despite our downward tendencies, man is led by what he feels within, and by what he sees around him, to look up to a Divine Power. The conscience within, telling us of a law and pointing to a law-giver; the

marks of order, beauty, and design in earth and sky, in plant and animal; the traces of providence and government, the encouragements to what is good and the penalties attached to evil, in the providence of God, — all these lead and constrain man to form some idea, some hope or fear or faith, in regard to a Supernatural Being. That Being we would fondly claim as a Father. But where is that Father? How can we know the way? "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The belief may be vague, the longing indefinite, — "an infant crying in the night," when its mother is gone, because it wants it knows not what; the want is positive, the object it cries for unknown, but there is a terrible cry for it when at any time it awakes.

The feeling is for something wanting, — something which has been lost. Man feels as if he had wandered. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." There must be a way — no doubt of it — to the Father, but how can we know the way? There is a way, but somehow we have lost it, and the difficulty is to find it; and when at any time we have found a track on this world's surface and set out on it, we are soon made to feel that it is not the right one, as it leads to no satisfactory termination. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." Conceive a revolving planet or a shining sun wandering from its sphere up there in that sky where "order is heaven's first law." Now it is hin-

dered and stayed by bodies attracting it or attracted by it, and forthwith it dashes through space, threatening to strike and break in fragments or to kindle into a conflagration all the other planets and suns it meets with. It is a picture of a wandering angel; it is a picture of a wandering man loosened from the Central Power that stays him, and from the Central Light that should illuminate him,—now restrained, sluggish, and slothful, and anon dancing along in perilous or destructive paths,—now in darkness, and again in light that blinds and bewilders, or among fires that consume. That wandering body up in the heavens would not right itself till brought back to its old position and made to move in its old path. That wandering sinner on earth will never right himself till brought back to his old relation to God, and is moving round him as a centre illuminated by his beams.

But how can we know the way? The flaming sword turned every way to keep the sinner from the tree of life; but that sword has entered into him who is God's fellow, and hath now no power against us, and there is a way opened by which the sinner can come into the very presence of God. "I am the way."

2. *Christ the Truth.*—By truth, in this passage, we are not to understand abstract or general doctrine, such as we have in our excellent Catechisms and Confessions of Faith. Such systematized truth being a comprehensive summary of the statements of God's

Word, may serve most important purposes in exhibiting the unity of the truth, in guiding the thoughts of the young and of inquirers generally, and in testing soundness in the faith; but it is not to such that our Lord refers when he says, "I am the truth."

Truth is defined by philosophers as the agreement of our ideas with things. When in any particular matter our views correspond to realities in that matter, we have truth. If we know God as he really is, then have we truth in religion. But how can we know God as he really is? When apart from Christ we would set out in search of him, how difficult to find him! Do we not feel as if he were at an infinite distance, as if he were at an awful distance above us, and beyond our reach; as if we could no more rise to him with our spirits than our frail bodies could mount from earth to heaven? Who will give us wings that we may ascend to him? Alas! the attraction of earth is too powerful to admit of our rising to him. Who, then, will go up to heaven to bring him down to us? As we make these searches and efforts we will soon find that they are all in vain. The approach must be on his part. The grandest thinker of all heathen antiquity (Plato) was obliged to say: "The father of the world is hard to discover, and when discovered cannot be communicated." "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Blessed be his eternal love and grace, the Father hath shown himself to us. Jesus saith to him who put the question, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not

seen me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father." When we go on by Christ as the way, he introduces us to the Father, and we have the truth. Here is the bridge that spans the chasm. Here is the link that joins the sundered parts.

"What is truth?" was the question put by Pilate to our Lord. It is usually said that Jesus did not give a reply. He may not have answered him in words, but he answered him in fact. The truth was before him if he had but known the gift of God, and who it was that was speaking to him. For when we know Christ we know God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." God is no longer at a distance; he is brought nigh, — Emmanuel, God with us.

The great philosopher Aristotle has said that the mind is organized for truth; as it came from its Maker it is organized for truth, as the eye is to perceive light and the ear to hear sounds. He who has found Christ knows that he has found the truth. With the truth there is assurance; the eye has found the light, the ear is listening to the sound. This, this is the reality of things. "I have found," "I have found," is the outburst and expression of the soul as it feels it has got what it has been seeking, and is satisfied.

God being put in his place, all other truth is put in its right place, in the creed and in the heart. For long ages scientific men, in constructing a theory of

the world, placed the earth in the centre, and the whole system became in consequence confused, and ever more hopelessly confused. It was not till the sun was put in his proper place in the centre, that order and simplicity were seen to reign in the mundane system. As long as we make the earth and man the centre of the moral world, everything is in hopeless confusion. Give Christ the central place in our creed, and we have the truth with all its clearness, its certainty, and assurance. Give Christ the proper place in the heart, and we shall find that as we revolve round him we are kept in our proper spheres, and are illuminated and warmed by his beams.

3. *Christ the Life*.—It is of vast moment that we know the way, all good that we reach the truth; but we must have more. The well-formed statue is an interesting object, but none of us would exchange our living condition for that of the chiselled marble which stands so cold and stiff on its pedestal. God's work was not half finished when he fashioned that goodly frame of ours out of the dust of the ground; it was not completed till he breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul. Along with the truth we must have life.

A living poet describes one of his characters as dead and buried under the streets of a city, and yet—inconsistent enough, I grant—hearing above him the clattering sounds which will not allow him the rest of the dead. It is a picture of not a few sinners,

perhaps of all sinners at certain times. They would have and yet they cannot have the insensibility of the dead. And so, since he cannot have absolute unconsciousness, he would have life. Yes, there are few or none so dead that they do not wish at times to have life. And yet when they would excite and stimulate it, they find that they have only the cold and the clamminess of death. They would mount up like a balloon into a higher and purer region, only to find that they are in thin air which will not support them; and in chill and in emptiness they find that they must descend if they would avoid a collapse and a fall. They would at times struggle like a strong swimmer thrown on the rude waves only to find himself hopelessly sinking. All their convulsive efforts are merely like those of the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, when they beat their breasts and cut their bodies only to find their sacrifices lying cold upon the altar. Alas! there are some of whom we expected that they should have gone forward, but they have looked back, like Lot's wife, and now they seem as if they had been turned into a pillar of salt, they look so rigid, so cold and motionless.

Feeling never will be excited in the bosom of any one by a mere command, by a mere determination to raise it. There must be a something to call it forth; there must be an object to call it forth; there must be an object looked to and apprehended to call it forth. Nor will it be evoked by an abstract

statement or general doctrine. It is called forth by a person, by an individual person, by a living person. There is such an object to call forth feeling, — in Christ, so lovely and so loving. Apprehended as the truth he becomes the life, — the life in the soul, the life of the soul.

The truth and the life: these are closely and indissolubly connected. The truth believed in is life, and there can be no spiritual life without an apprehension of Christ, the Truth. But we are to beware of sundering the truth and the life; still more are we to beware of separating Christ from either the truth or the life. Christ apprehended as the truth becomes the life. He becomes so by his spirit dwelling in us, — the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of life. Being united to him by faith in him, as the branch is united to the vine, the life that is in him flows into us and circulates in us, and we become members of his body. This life, this bursting life within, will find an outlet, it will go out in deeds of faith and love. It will prompt us to do good, as God may give opportunity, to all men, — to Jew and Gentile, to Christian and heathen, to the outcast at home and the pagan abroad.

## II.

### THE TRUTHS IN THEIR CONNECTION.

The full truth is to be found in the union of these various truths; not in their mere conglomeration,



but in their proper union, in which each has its proper place.

If we would have a true religion, and a proper theology founded upon it, we must not only give Christ a place, — we must give him the supreme place, all else being subordinate to him. He must not only be in the building as a stone, he must be the corner-stone, in order to have a sure foundation. He must not only be in the arch, he must be the keystone, to keep all the parts fitly joined together, and thus bear up the weight to be laid upon it.

When each has its proper place, Christ is the head and other things the members. Displace Christ the head from this his proper position, and the whole form becomes disproportioned, — like those fabulous persons who were supposed by the ancients to be found somewhere on the earth's surface with their heads under their arms.

There are some who would have men first to find the way, and then in the way to find Christ. But Christ is himself the way. "I am the way;" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." Some put the Church before Christ, and would have inquirers first to find the true church, and then through it to find Christ. But this is to reverse the proper and scriptural order. Let us first seek Christ; and when we have found Christ we are in the true church invisible, and in his pure light we shall be able to discern the proper church visible. That is the true church which makes Christ the head,

“from which, all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”

Some there are who would have us first seek the truth, and then seek Christ ; and by all means let those who have not yet had Christ be exhorted to seek the truth. Yes, seekers of truth deserve all the honor that has been paid to them. There are too few sincere seekers of truth among us. Sincere and prayerful seekers of truth will sooner or later reach what they are seeking. But seekers of truth will never find truth in religion till they find Christ. So Justin Martyr acknowledged, in the early Church, after going the round of all the philosophies of Greece. So the great Augustine found, after seeking in vain for wisdom and happiness in such varied quarters. So Luther was made to feel, when, after trying the acts of will-worship recommended by the Church, he found all to be fruitless of peace. Let us not go out with the tapers of earth to seek the sun; the sun is shining in the heavens, and is seen in his own light. Any other light can at best be merely like the star raised in the heavens to guide the wise men of the East, serving a good end only so far as it guides us to where Christ as the truth is to be found.

Again, some would find life without Christ. There is a general feeling in the present day among all the churches, that we must have life, religious life. Even Socinians, in some places, profess to be seeking a revival. But there are some seeking for it apart from

Christ. Their appeal is to inward feelings, sentiments, and intuitions. But what, I ask, is to evoke such sentiments from our dead and sinful hearts? There must be an object to call them forth; there must be a living being to draw them towards himself. That being is Christ, as he presents himself in all his loveliness and attractiveness. But they tell us that this affection may be called out by such grand and generous ideas as the infinite and the eternal. I admit that there are such ideas, and I am opposed to that philosophy of the day which makes them mere negations; but these ideas call forth love only when they are associated with a living being whose love is infinite, whose love is eternal.

There are some who would seek for Christ under one of these aspects or in one of these characters, but who do not care for the others. Thus, there are some who are anxious to have Christ as the way, but who stop at the entrance, instead of going on in the path which has been opened. This is a temptation to which some are exposed in days of revival. They are most anxious to have Christ for salvation; but having found the Saviour, as they think, and peace and assurance, they feel as if they required no more, and they do not go on to stablish themselves in the truth. Some of these are apt to become teachers when they should still be scholars. How wise the warning of the Apostle, who, in describing the qualifications of teachers, says they should not be "novices," lest, being puffed up with pride, they fall

into the condemnation of the Devil! What those who are born from above need is training, and a settling in the truth; and being taught themselves, they will be ready to teach others.

Again, some are contented with the truth without the life. They are satisfied with their orthodox creed, with their reverence for the Bible, with their attendance at the house of God and at religious meetings. This it is that gives a pretext to the enemies of evangelical religion when they declare that religious professors are no better than others, and to affirm that if Christ were among us he would address ministers and people as "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Such a formal religion is offensive to man, even as it is displeasing to God. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men."

Again, there is a very different class, who seek the life without the truth. Some are led into this by a reaction against a stiff formalism or a frigid orthodoxy. In other cases it proceeds from an unwillingness to submit to any restraints. We have an attempt to realize such an idea and to carry out such a project in this country in our day. Persons are calling for a life which is to be independent of all the old forms of orthodoxy and of the letter of the Word of God. But I, for one, do not feel that I am called on to fight for the additions which men have made to

divine truth. There is a curse pronounced at the close of the Bible against those who would add to it. "For I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." But there is also a curse ready to alight on those who would diminish aught from that Word. "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Of this I am sure, that the life which is not supported by scriptural truth will be of a very uncertain and wavering and transient character. By all means let us have the fire, and the flame too. But no fire can be kept up and sustained without a solid material: that solid material is the truth of God's Word.

We may now consider these truths specially in their practical connection. And here, as in regard to doctrinal belief, let us not put asunder what the Lord hath indissolubly joined together. The garment which falls to our lot is woven throughout and without seam, and cannot be divided. That garment is Christ's, and becomes ours through his sufferings and death.

Jesus was so called from his birth, because he saves his people from their sins. The work is his throughout. Let us consider how much is involved

in this salvation. Let us look to him for pardon,—by all means for pardon, for it is to be found nowhere else. But this is not all that is involved in salvation; he is Jesus, so called, not only because he saves from the consequences of sin, but because he saves from the sins themselves.

If I am to have the love of the world and of the things that are in the world subdued, it must be by having my heart fixed on a new object which I love more dearly; it must be by Christ becoming the supreme object of affection. No man was ever yet saved from his sins by merely striving with them. Alas! many brave men have been defeated in the fight, and have been merely exasperated by the struggle, as the prisoner is chafed in beating upon the walls of his prison from which there is no escape; as the eagle is irritated by dashing upon its cage; as the sea is lashed into foam by being driven upon the rocks. "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." It is when I am led to love Christ that I am delivered from that selfishness which is so deeply seated in the soul, and which so cleaves to me. It was when the ark of the covenant was put into the temple of Dagon that the idol fell down, and it was as it continued there, that all attempts to raise him up failed, and he became more crushed and broken. And it is thus

that these idols of ours are cast down before the presence and power of Jesus as he condescends to enter our hearts. This is the pearl of great price, which, when a man hears of, he sells all that he has, all worldly lusts and passions, that he may have it, and he feels that he is rich when he has such a possession. Swayed by this new and higher and more potent affection, he is ready to part with the lusts which have been dearest to him when he discovers them to be offensive to Him whom his soul loveth. If his right eye offends him he plucks it out and casts it from him; if his right hand offends him he cuts it off and casts it from him. And when at any time the believer is led into sin and is tempted to go on headstrong in his course, he is brought to repentance, as Peter was, by a view of Jesus as he turns round and looks upon him; it is that look of Jesus which makes him "go out and weep bitterly."

It is as we look up to that star in the sky that this downward look of ours is uplifted, and our frame becomes erect, and our path becomes a forward one. It is this light shining above us, as the sun, which shows us the path and cheers us as we walk in it.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE PRODUCED BY THE  
SPIRIT BEING POURED FORTH.

I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him. — ZECH. xii. 10.

THIS language refers in the first instance to the Jews. The time is coming when in consequence of God pouring out his Spirit on that people, they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn. "Whom they have pierced" is the language. We all know how literally it was fulfilled; and this by the people who have the Old Testament in their hands and have been the main instruments in handing it down to us. His whole body was cruelly pierced. His head was pierced by the crown of thorns laid upon it; his back was pierced by the terrible scourging of the Roman soldiery; his side was pierced by the spear thrust into it, and his hands and his feet by the nails which fixed him to the cross. His soul also was pierced through by many wounds, by "agony," and "exceeding sorrow even unto death." "His blood be on us and on our children" was the prayer or imprecation of the Jews when Pilate was unwilling to take the responsibility of shedding that

blood. How fearfully has that curse descended upon the Jews and their children from generation to generation! But it is a striking circumstance that you can scarcely point out a passage in which the Jews are spoken of as being cast off, without finding somewhere near it language which denotes that they are again to be visited with the favor of God. In this passage, while they are spoken of as piercing their Lord, they are represented as looking by faith on him whom they have pierced, and mourning over their sinfulness in deepest contrition. That elder branch of the family is at present doomed like Cain, with a brother's blood crying to Heaven for vengeance upon them, to wander upon the face of the earth; but the time is coming when the blood which they imprecated upon themselves and upon their children shall speak better things than the blood of Abel, and shall be upon their children as the blood that speaketh peace and cleanseth from all sin.

While the language refers in the first instance to the Jews, it admits of a legitimate application to others. There is not a gracious promise given in the Old Testament to Israel, which we may not take to ourselves through Jesus who broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. Let us look for the fulfilment of the promise as we contemplate—first, the Gracious Promise; and secondly, the accomplishment of it in the Faith and Repentance of the returning sinner.

## I.

THE NEED OF THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT IN  
ORDER TO FAITH AND REPENTANCE.

The sinner is described in the Word as being dead in trespasses and sins. Behold in Lazarus sleeping in the tomb a picture of man in his natural state. Eyes had he, but they saw not; ears had he, but they heard not; feet had he, but they moved not; hands had he, but they handled not. It is a figure of the sinner who has lost spiritual power and discernment. Eyes has he, but he sees no beauty in Christ that he should desire him. Ears has he, but he will not attend to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so sweetly; high powers and faculties, but these are not employed in the service of God. Not till he, who standing by the grave uttered the command, "Lazarus, come forth!" not till he says, "Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" not till then will these eyes behold the king in his beauty, and these ears listen in docility to the teaching of Christ, and these gifts of God be employed in the service of the Giver.

Not only does the sinner yet in his sins need to be thus quickened, but the very people of God require again and again the living power of the same Spirit who at first regenerated their souls. For even after he has been raised from his natural deadness, he is apt anew to fall into spiritual slumber.

Behold in Jonah asleep on the deck of a vessel which was to carry him away to a heathen country where he thought he might forget God and good,— behold in the obstinate prophet asleep in the midst of the waters raging around him, a picture of many of the professing and of not a few of the true people of God asleep in the midst of the waves of temptation. How much need of a voice like that of the heathen mariners to Jonah: “Arise, thou sleeper, and call upon thy God.”

I need not dwell on the necessity of repentance. If all men have sinned, it needs no argument to prove that all men should repent. Is there one here who thinks that he needs no repentance, some proud formalist whose feeling is expressed in the language, “Stand by, for I am holier than thou;” some Pharisee who acknowledges that this publican should mourn over his sins, but claims that such a one as he himself is, does not require to grieve very long or very deeply over sins which are so slight and trivial,—I affirm, and I affirm it deliberately, that there is no man within these walls who has greater need to have his heart melted. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Those who would repent, need to be told that in order to repent they need power from on high. Repentance is the gift of him who is “exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” It is when the Spirit is poured out that sinners are brought to genuine

repentance,—that is, repentance unto life. Without this, there will always be a shying, an avoiding of the humiliation implied,—always an obstacle in the way,—and the heart will turn aside like a deceitful bow.

Look at this individual who has come to see that he is following a course which he now feels to be wrong. It is Cain charged with the murder of a brother; or it is Judas returning the money which the priests had given him as the price of treachery. The man is stunned and pained, and knows not whither to turn. Now he confesses his sin, and now he is inclined to deny or excuse it. Sometimes he labors hard to banish the recollection of it from his mind, and forthwith the remembrance rushes in upon him like a torrent. Is this man a penitent? No one who knows what repentance is, will allow that he is. What, then, does he want? What does he need? He is without faith and genuine repentance, and he needs the presence and power of the Spirit of God to strike that heart which has been stunned but has not been broken.

Or look again to that other individual, still more moved and distressed by the reproaches of conscience. It is Esau weeping bitterly over the loss of ill-gotten gains, or Felix trembling while Paul is speaking to him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. It is the dishonest man caught with his ill-gotten gains, the liar with a detected falsehood, or the drunkard after a previous night's

debauch. Is this man repenting? There may be an agitated frame, there may be tossings of body and gnawings of soul, there may be bitter tears, there may be anxious days and sleepless nights, there may be reproaches as to the past and fears as to the future; but no one of these constitutes, nor do all of these constitute repentance. These bitter waters flowing from the yet unsanctified soul will only sour the tender affections, and render the whole nature and character barren, as the land around Jericho was till the prophet healed its waters. It is when the grace of God is introduced into the heart, as the salt was cast into the waters of Jericho, that there is henceforth no more death nor barrenness.

As long as the heart is untouched by the spirit of grace, it either remains in a state of utter insensibility in reference to God and sin on the one hand, or, on the other hand, it is troubled with feelings of reproach and fear, but without being persuaded and changed. In ordinary circumstances the sinner is disposed to think of God and the relation in which he stands to Him as seldom as possible. There may be times, however, when he is shaken out of his habitual self-complacency. Possibly disease has seized upon him, and death seems in hard pursuit, and hell appears not far behind. Or the conscience is awakened, he cannot tell how, from its habitual lethargy; it speaks to him as one having authority, and summons him as it were to the bar of God's judgment, to give an account of his actions. Now, the great

body of mankind flit between these two extremes, being generally in a state of insensibility, but at times troubled with regrets as to the past and fears as to the future. But as the heart when in the one state, that of unconcern, is in a sinful condition, so in the other state, of mere compunction and fear, it is far from being in a healthy state. We need the power from on high on the one hand to arouse us from our habitual carelessness, and on the other hand to conduct to genuine faith and true peace. We may seek for repentance, and like Esau seek it carefully with tears; but we can "find no place for repentance" till He who knows our hearts and has access to them unlocks them and opens up fountains within us. Mere natural reproaches of conscience and alarms of coming judgments may stun the heart for a time, but they cannot break or melt it.

Can we bring water out of the rock? No; but when spoken to in the power of God, waters will gush out as they did at Horeb. And now the bosom, pained though it may have been for a time, finds relief. We have heard of the sorrowful spirit, after the eyes had continued long dry, finding relief in a flood of tears; we have seen an angry sky discharging itself in showers, and then smiling in peace and loveliness. Of a like nature is the relief given to the troubled mind when the heart, long pent and straitened, finds vent in true faith and genuine repentance. The crowded bosom now finds an outlet, the confined heart experiences enlargement, and the

fettered spirit is free. The feelings are now poured forth from the broken heart like the ointment from the alabaster box when the woman that was a sinner broke it and poured the ointment on the feet of Jesus.

The very people of God have reason at times to mourn over a narrowness of heart, over unfitness for the service of God, and an aversion to spiritual things. Every feeling is straitened: their faith is straitened, their love is straitened, their peace is straitened, their joy is straitened, their hope is straitened, their energy is straitened. The tears of penitence on the one hand will not flow from their eyes, nor the hopes of the just cheer them on the other. Every faculty and feeling is at present like the sails of the vessel on the ocean, when there is no wind to expand them, and they hang idly and loosely, and the ship is making no progress. But while they are straitened, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened; let such pray that the Spirit would come as he came on the day of Pentecost, like the mighty rushing wind, to expand their hearts and hasten their progress towards perfection and towards heaven. They feel as if they had not a word to speak at present in God's behalf, as if they had nothing wherewith to show forth God's praise; let them pray that the Spirit would come, as on the day of Pentecost, in tongues of fire, and then they will sing aloud in God's praise. When the Spirit is poured out from on high, then they are able to believe and repent, to love and to serve God.

## II.

THE EFFECTS PRODUCED WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS  
POURED OUT: "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM  
THEY HAVE PIERCED, AND MOURN."

I. They "look on him whom they have pierced."  
By looking unto a pierced Lord, we are just to understand faith in one of its liveliest exercises. In the rich and pictured style of language employed in the Word, faith is often described by one of its most expressive acts; the outward sign is put for the inward sentiment. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, till he have mercy on us." The believer looks to Christ and his wounds with the eye of the mind, just as the serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the serpent of brass which Moses raised by the command of God.

And whenever the Spirit is poured out from on high, the instant effect is the production of faith. Faith, indeed, seems to be the first, — always along with repentance, — saving or spiritual grace of the Christian character. It must be so, from the very nature of things. Till the offers of mercy are accepted, and this by faith, they cannot be ours, or be of any service to us. Till the eye looks to the object raised, the disease will not stop its ravages.

But it is not everything that passes under the name of faith, nor every kind of faith, that has efficacy to save the sinner. Our attention is called in this passage to two features of saving faith.

First, you perceive that it looks to a pierced Lord. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced." This is the object to which faith is specially directed. It is not sufficient that we look to the glorious and spotless perfections of Jehovah in the abstract. Many have very enlightened views of the nature and character of Jehovah, who, alas! have none of that faith which appropriates salvation. Nor is it sufficient that we look to God through the medium of the operations of his hands in the works of creation. Many are conversant with the more conspicuous of the works of God in the earth and visible heavens, and can trace the wisdom of his ways in providence, who never apply to the blood which cleanses from sin. Faith looks specially to God the Mediator, to God who is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. The faith that saves is a faith in Jesus the appointed Saviour. Nor is it enough that we look to the Son of God as enthroned in heaven. He is there encircled by too great a blaze of light to be steadily contemplated by the eye of the helpless sinner. If we would obtain that saving power which flows from him, we must look to the wounds by which he was pierced, and the blood that flows from them. The contemplation of the Son of God in all his glory in

heaven may well awe the sinner, but it will not melt the stubbornness of the heart; it may elevate the man already a believer, but it will not comfort the anxious inquirer. It is the contemplation of Jesus laying aside all this glory and tabernacling on the earth; it is the contemplation of the manger at Bethlehem, of the flight into Egypt, of the dreary temptation in the wilderness, of the reproaches and contumely which he received, of the agony of the Garden, of the unjust sentence pronounced against him, of the crown of thorns, the cup of gall and the hidings of the Father's countenance, of the pains of death and the gloom of the sepulchre,—it is the contemplation of these, it is the contemplation, in short, of a pierced Lord, which pierces the heart of the sinner and causes it to melt in tenderness and in love. Never till we look to a pierced, to a suffering, a bleeding Saviour, will we find our spiritual diseases healed and our soul filled with light and comfort. The Jew looks to a conquering and triumphant Messiah, and his heart remains cold and estranged. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him, he will look to a pierced Lord, and feelings of faith and penitence will spring up.

Observe, as another characteristic of saving faith, that it leads those who possess it to look to Jesus as pierced by them. "They shall look on me whom they have pierced." But, you may be asking, what share had we in the sufferings of Jesus? We were not living in the days of his earthly pilgrimage,

we never wounded that body, we never tortured that soul. You may have heard of the king who, on hearing a description of the ill usage which Jesus received, exclaimed, "If I and my brave Franks had been there, I had prevented this!" But such feelings and language resemble too much those of the Jews who put our Lord to death. They declared that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would not have been guilty with them of the blood of the prophets. I believe that there is something in every man — a carnal enmity against God and all that bears his image — which would most certainly have tempted us, if not restrained by grace, to join, if our lot had been cast in his days, in the cry of his persecutors.

But it can serve no good purpose to speculate as to what might have been our conduct had we lived in such different circumstances from those in which we are at present placed. Independently of all such considerations, I assert that every sinner has had, in a sense, a part in inflicting the sufferings to which our Lord was subjected. You must learn to connect your sins with the Saviour's sufferings. The Jews, indeed, were the guilty instruments of inflicting all these injuries; but there is a previous question, — how did Jesus come to submit to them all? The Jews had power to crucify him; but the malice of the Jews, great though it was, could not have brought him down from heaven to earth, or torn him from the embraces of his Father's love. They could no

more have done this than they could have plucked a star or the sun from the firmament. The power which Pilate and the Jews exercised was a power given or allowed them. "Thou hadst had no power unless it had been given thee." All Christ's labors were voluntarily undertaken, all his sorrows were willingly undergone. When Peter was about to employ force in order to rescue him, he rebuked the officious attempt: "Thinkest thou that I cannot even now pray to my Father, and he will presently send twelve legions of angels?" They cried when he was suspended on the cross: "Let him come down, and we will believe on him." And he could have come down from the cross; but in that event, belief in him could have had no saving power. He could have burst the nails that fixed him to the tree; but from that instant man must have been fast bound in the chains of everlasting death.

When we read the account in the Gospels of the trials of Jesus, we cannot but feel indignation rising in our breasts against those who committed such wickedness; but when our indignation is at its greatest height, let us turn round and direct it against ourselves, — against our sins, the true enemies and murderers of our Lord. "He tasted of death for every one;" and your sins, believer, formed one of the elements of that cup of wrath which he had to drink to the very dregs. Your sins, believer, were part of the sins which he bore in his own body on the tree. It was the accumulated sins of all and each

of his people which weighed him down to the ground in the Garden and bowed his head on the cross. Let us look upon our sins as one of the scourges that lacerated his body, as a branch of the crown of thorns that surrounded his holy brow, as a drop of the gall mixed with vinegar given him to drink, as a part of the dark cloud that covered the Father's face from his view.

This I reckon as a distinguishing feature of saving faith. The sinner connects his sins with the sufferings of his Redeemer. When he thinks of Christ's sufferings, he thinks how his sins were the cause of their infliction, and he thinks that if Christ had not borne them he himself must have borne them. He thus looks upon Jesus, not so much in the light of a Saviour for others as one suited to himself. His faith thus becomes a faith in Jesus as his Saviour; it embraces Christ, and appropriates the blessings which he purchased.

2. Another effect is mourning, or repentance. Faith and repentance ever go together as the saving graces. When Paul was at Ephesus, he preached everywhere repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And here we will not enter upon the question sometimes discussed among theologians, as to whether faith goes before repentance, or repentance goes before faith. The two, as it appears to me, come together. It is a sense of sin that drives us to the Saviour, and we come to the Saviour by faith; the sinner looks to Christ by the eye of faith, and

as he does so he mourns and repents. There may be, indeed, and there generally are, convictions of sin going before faith; but a believing view of God is necessary to full repentance. It is when we get a proper view of God that we are brought to bow before him in the dust: "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." Thus do the more joyful join with the more plaintive notes in the song with which the soul approaches the Redeemer.

But how, you ask, should sorrow be the effect of a saving view of Christ? You will find an answer to this question suggested by the train of remark which we have been following. We are called to mourn over the sufferings of our Lord because of our connection with them; we mourn when we look on him whom we have pierced. It cannot be otherwise. Conceive a prodigal who had been awakened to a sense of his sin, standing by the death-bed of a father whose gray hairs were being brought down, by the infatuation of that son, with sorrow to the grave. What would be the first feeling rising in that son's breast? Would it not be sorrow over the part he had acted and the consequences produced? As he thought of the kindness and forbearance of that parent, of the many advices which he had given him, alas! only to be despised, or as he heard even now that father declaring that he forgave every offence which had been committed,

and prayed day and night for the welfare of that son, would this check the son's grief, or would it not open new fountains of sorrow to flow from his eyes more freely than before? We need not apply the illustration. If the prodigal could not but feel in this way, how is it possible for the believer to stand at the foot of the cross and look on him whom his sins have pierced, and not experience the deepest sorrow? True it is, every word that comes from the Saviour's lips is melting with tenderness; but this circumstance just makes the believer mourn all the more when he thinks how he has offended so kind a Saviour. When Peter, in the very act of denying his Master, received from him that look so full of love, what could he do but go out and weep bitterly?

Or, to vary our illustration, conceive what must have been the feelings of the brethren of Joseph when he revealed himself to them in the land of Egypt. "I am Joseph, thy brother," was the language addressed to their astonished ears. What! is this the brother against whom we in the malice of our hearts conspired, — the brother whom some of us proposed to kill, and who was actually sold as a slave? What was left to them but to cast themselves on the ground and pour out their soul in bitter reflections. It is all very true, they might be reminded, this brother is giving us the best proof that he has forgiven us; all very true, that what we meant for evil has in the providence of God been overruled

for good; and the very troubles through which this brother has passed, have been the means of saving the family. All this may be true; but still it cannot diminish the baseness, the cruelty of the deed we have committed. Now, we stand towards Jesus in much the same relation as the ten brethren of Joseph did towards him. He condescends to be called our elder brother; he has been a friend sticking to us closer than a brother, and yet we have been ashamed of him; we have treated him worse than any man ever treated any other; we have injured, denied, and betrayed him. What can we do when we discover all this, but give ourselves up to sorrow, and wish that our eyes were fountains of tears that we might weep day and night for a pierced Lord.

Let us look, in closing, at some of the characteristics of evangelical sorrow.

You perceive the source of the genuine penitent's sorrow. He mourns over the wounds that have been inflicted, but he mourns chiefly over his connection with them. He might not mourn at all, or he might not mourn so deeply, if his sins had not been connected with Christ's death. He hears Jesus as it were saying, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves;" and he weeps over those sins which have crucified the Lord of glory, and do still crucify him afresh and put him to open shame.

The penitent has a deep view of the evil of sin. Never do we see the evil of sin in such fearful colors

as when we stand at the foot of the cross. In whatever aspect we view it, we see its heinousness: whether we look upon it as the violation of a pure and holy law, or as the worst enemy of man, or as the fruitful source of every other evil to which we are exposed,—of the famines, plagues, and pestilences which have devastated the earth, and of the outward annoyances and inward reproaches which disturb our peace. But never, surely, does sin look so black and heinous as when we regard it as the cause of the death of the Son of God. What can the sinner do when he sees this, but mourn and be in bitterness?

Observe the extent of this sorrow. The penitent mourns over his sin as deeply as over his greatest earthly loss. He mourns as one mourneth for an only son, as one that is in bitterness for a first-born. Repentance, then, does not consist in a mere resolution to mourn, in a mere passing emotion of grief, or a momentary sadness when we happen to be disappointed or when our spirits are melancholy. It is not like the sorrow at the death of some friend in whom we may feel an interest, but whose loss does not affect us very deeply. We follow the remains of such an one to the grave in unfeigned sadness, but our grief is neither very poignant nor lasting. But such is not the grief of the penitent. It is as when the mother sees the remains of her first-born carried from her dwelling, or the long funeral wind away to the place of the dead. It is as when the father lowers the remains of his only child in the grave,

and returns to spend the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage in sadness and solitude.

Specially observe that this sorrow for sin is not a sorrow apart from Christ or independent of him ; neither is it a sorrow without hope. It is a sorrow which springs from the view of a pierced Lord, and brings us to that pierced Lord for pardon and for peace. If the wounds of Jesus cannot but open up wounds in our breast, they also supply the balm that heals the wounds.

## NATURE OF FAITH AND REPENTANCE.

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. — ACTS xx. 21.

EVERY one knows that the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, began with the Baptist preaching repentance always along with faith (Matt. iii. 2): "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" as much as to say, Repent, as ye believe in that kingdom which is coming. It has not been so generally noticed that Jesus began his preaching with the same themes (Matt. iv. 17): "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And now in the Christian church we find Paul, who had sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, reminding them that when among them he had testified to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. These two, repentance and faith as they had been proclaimed by the forerunner of our Lord, by our Lord himself, and by the great preacher among the apostles, are to be preached in all ages, to all people, to the uneducated, but also to the educated; not only

to the heathen, the outcast, the degraded, but also to the refined, the enlightened; "to the Jews, and also to the Greeks." The preacher is unfaithful to the trust committed to him who does not from time to time enforce the necessity of faith and repentance.

These two are not the highest of the graces. Repentance was not required of man in Paradise, nor is it enjoined upon the angels and saints in heaven. There is a higher grace than faith: "There abideth these three: faith, hope, and charity; but the greatest of these is charity." Repentance and faith are not the highest round of the ladder; they are rather the lowest step on which we must place our feet if we would ascend. They are the two saving graces of the Christian character. They do not constitute the temple; they are the two-leaved gates standing open by which we enter. It will serve little purpose to begin with saying to the sinner, "Love God and be holy and perfect;" for he finds that when he would attempt this, he miserably fails; when he would mount to heaven without faith as wings, he falters and falls. The teacher does not begin with trying to teach his pupils science and philosophy; he imparts simpler and more rudimentary lessons, and would thus carry them to higher truths. The physician does not say to his patients, Be healthy and strong; he requires them to submit to a regimen, and to partake of the medicines that may heal them. It is after this manner that our Lord deals with man,

and this in thorough accordance with our nature. Faith and repentance are the milk and not the strong meat which Christ gives to babes. As sinners they have to start from this low ground, that they may succeed in rising to love and obedience, to holiness and heaven.

## I.

## REPENTANCE TOWARDS GOD.

I need not dwell on the necessity of repentance. If all men have sinned, it needs no argument to prove that all should repent. Is there one in this assembly who thinks that he needs no repentance,—some proud formalist whose spirit is expressed in the language, “Stand by, for I am holier than thou;” some self-righteous Pharisee who is willing to acknowledge that this publican should mourn over his sins, but assumes that for himself he does not require to grieve very long or deeply over offences which are so slight and trivial, and these balanced by excellences,—I affirm, and affirm it deliberately, that there is no man within these walls who has greater need to have his heart melted. “Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish.”

But what is the nature of the repentance which is so imperatively required of us? *It is, first, a true sense of sin.* It does not consist in a mere fear of the consequences of sin, as when a man gets himself into trouble by a wrong act, and is vexed, annoyed,

and angry with himself for being so foolish, and regrets that he ever did the deed. One may do all this, and meanwhile have no appreciation of the evil of his conduct; he loves the sin as much as he ever did before, and if he could avoid the consequences, he would engage in it as greedily as ever. Cain was not a penitent when he expressed himself, "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" this shows that he had a sense of the consequences of the sin, but not of the sin itself. It will be found of the person who goes no farther than this, that his compunctions have little or no influence in preserving him from like sins in time to come. He regrets to-day, only to return to the offence to-morrow.

The true penitent has a sense of the evil of sin in itself. He regards it as a disobedience to that law of love which he perceives to be holy, just, and good. He grieves over it as giving offence to that God who is so pure and holy, and who has shown him such kindness. He sees it to be injurious to the best interests of the soul, and in many forms of it to be unjust or injurious to his fellow-men. Viewing it in this light, he sees it to be evil, and only evil. Before, he rolled it as a sweet morsel under his tongue, and when charged with it he was inclined to deny it, or excuse it, or explain it away. Now, he sees it to be utterly bad and inexcusable, and he acknowledges it to God,—and to his fellow-men when it has done them injury.

Sometimes the repentance begins in a sense of

some particular sin; but it does not stop there. As the sinner discovers the stream to be polluted, he traces it up to the fountain and discovers that the heart is corrupt. Show the physician an outward symptom, a pain or weakness or colored spot on a limb, and he may have to follow it to its source in a deeply-seated distemper. So it is with the penitent: an outbreak of selfishness, or lust, or passion at once reveals to him that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, and that from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet there is no soundness. In other cases, penitence begins in a deep sense of the evil of sin generally, and the depravity of our nature. But when it is genuine, it becomes a sense of the individual sins into which we have fallen. It is recorded in the life of a faithful minister, that on visiting a dying woman he found her describing herself as an awful sinner; but having doubts of her spiritual state, he went over with her the ten commandments, to find that she could not be brought to acknowledge that she had been guilty of breaking any one of them, which proved to him that she was deceiving herself. The true penitent sees the evil of sin both in the corruption of the heart and the particular sins that spring from that source.

Secondly, in true repentance there is *an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ*. It is not a sorrow apart from Christ, nor independent of him; neither is it a sorrow without hope. Despondency,

or despair, is not repentance. The showers are always lightened by sunshine from heaven, and the tears run down the furrows made by smiles. It is not good for any man to mourn alone, and cover up his sorrow in his bosom, there like a cancer to eat ever inward. Listen to the experience of the Psalmist (Ps. xxxii. 3): "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Such was his experience as long as he confined his feelings to his bosom; but he goes on to say: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." From that instant he had peace; as we have seen an angry sky discharging itself in showers, and the whole landscape joyous with smiling sunshine. The proper attitude of the penitent is that of the woman who was a sinner, mentioned in the Gospels. She had been brought to see her sin, and to know that there was a Saviour; she learns that he has gone into the house of a Pharisee; she follows him hither, at the risk of being repulsed; she comes into the place where he was; she bends over his body; tears fall from her eyes upon the feet of Jesus, and afraid lest she might have given offence, she wipes them with the hair of her head. Such is the proper position of the true penitent, — not mourning in empty solitude, but

seeking out Christ, coming to him in holy boldness, pouring out his sorrows to him, and laying his sins upon him.

Thirdly, the sinner turns unto God with *the earnest and determined purpose to give up his sin*. This is the consummation of the whole. This is *μεταβολα*, — the change of mind in which true penitence is consummated. There may be other and lower kinds of repentance, so called in Scripture, but not called *μεταβολα*. Pharaoh repented, in a sense, when the plagues were upon him and his people; but when they passed away, his repentance also passed away. Judas is said to have repented, and he returned the thirty pieces he had received as the price of blood; but he went out and hanged himself. Genuine repentance always carries with it reformation. At this point, faith joins on to penitence. Faith brings us to God, but we are driven to this step by penitence. As the result of the whole, the view we have got of sin leads us to turn away from it; but for this purpose we turn to God through faith, and obtain strength to accomplish our end. There may be a struggle before we succeed, — nay, there may be one struggle after another; there may be partial defeat, but always succeeded by triumph. This is the fruit, and it is the test of the genuineness of the penitence: "By their fruits shall ye know them;" "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

## II.

## FAITH TOWARDS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

There is an idea entertained by some that faith is a very mysterious exercise, — visionary, unreal, inexpressible, and inexplicable, as incomprehensible as some of the grand objects at which it looks; and they excuse themselves from seeking what is so difficult to catch, or they content themselves with clasping a cloud when they might have a substantial reality. Now, there is no operation of mind more simple in itself, or which man is called on more frequently to employ, than faith. He who would obstinately decline to exercise faith must needs go out of this world; and he knows of no other world to which to go. The boy believes in the love of his father, the pupil in the knowledge of his teacher, the youth in the trustworthiness of his bosom friend, the farmer in the seasons, the patient in the medicine of his physician, the merchant in the correspondence between demand and supply, and the scholar in the value of research. Religion, in requiring us to believe, is not demanding anything unreasonable or unnatural. Change the object to which it is directed: let it be a faith, not in an earthly but a heavenly Father; not in an erring human teacher, but a divine and infallible one; not in a friend who may fail in the time of need, but one that "sticketh closer than a brother;" not in a captain who may

himself fall in the fight, but one who has gained the victory and will make us conquerors, and more than conquerors; not in medicines which cure the body, but the blood of Christ, which heals the soul; not in the revolution of the seasons, but the grander movements of God's providence; not in the laws which regulate the acquisition and distribution of wealth, but the connection between sin and suffering, between holiness and heaven; not in the value of human scholarship, but of divine learning,—and it becomes the faith that sanctifies and saves.

A word here as to an academic question often discussed, What is faith psychologically,—that is, as an exercise of the soul? Is it an act of the head, or the heart; of the understanding, or the feelings?—of both? of one? of which? To this questioning I answer, first, that all these phrases need to be explained. So far as they are in common use, they are vague and ambiguous; so far as they belong to mental science, no two metaphysicians explain them alike. "With the heart man believeth," is the Scripture statement (Rom. viii. 10), but with the heart in the sense in which it is used in Scripture, where it denotes greatly more than the English word does, vastly more than the mere feelings or affections; for we read of people understanding with the heart, and of the imaginations of the heart. In Scripture, the word stands for inward thought and feeling of every kind, and includes all the purposing and

sentiment which pass through the mind prior to action.

You may have observed that while the phrases "believe" and "faith" occur so frequently in the New Testament, the word employed commonly in the Old Testament is "trust" and "confide." The faith that saves is more than a mere intellectual judgment,—it is trust, it is confidence; and this comprises an exercise of the will: it implies and involves choice. We attach ourselves to God, to Christ; we cast ourselves upon him, we rest upon him. According to this view, faith consists of a consent of the will to the assent of the understanding,—the two in combination raising feeling according to the nature of the truths apprehended and believed in.

It is the first and fundamental truth of the gospel, that the sinner is justified by faith. This doctrine runs through the whole Scriptures. Abraham was justified by faith, as it is said that faith was imputed to him for righteousness. "The just shall live by faith" is the statement of Habbakuk, quoted more than once by Paul. It was the language which moved the heart of Luther till it impelled him to set forth in the great work of removing the rubbish which had been allowed to accumulate and cover the simple truths of the Word till it all but buried them beneath it.

It is belief in this truth—no, not belief in truth, but a belief in Jesus Christ—that brings relief to

the soul of the sinner. The condemnation is felt to be lying upon it as a heavy and grievous burden; it is the curse of God, revealed against all disobedience. But here in Christ is obedience, to meet our case as having no righteousness; here is suffering, to stand for the suffering which we have deserved: "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Not only does it deliver us from condemnation, it accomplishes other and higher ends. What a power even in our earthly faiths, — as when men sow in the assurance that they will reap after a long season, and labor in the confidence of a distant reward! What an efficacy in the trust which the child reposes in the parent, which the scholar puts in his teacher, which the soldier places in his general! These are among the chief potencies which have been alluring men to good. As it walks on courageously, faith discovers an outlet where sense feared that the way was shut in and closed. Difficulties give way as it advances, and impossibilities to prudence speedily become accomplishments before the might of faith. To it we owe the greatest achievements which mankind have effected in art, in travel, in conquest. Setting out in search of the unseen, they have made it seen and palpable. It was thus that Columbus persevered till the long-looked-for country burst upon his view; it is always thus that men discover new lands and new worlds outside those previously known. But how much more powerful is faith in

God! It is no doubt weak, in that it leans; but it is strong, in that it leans on the arm of the Omnipotent. It is a creature impotency, which lays hold of the Creator's power. It can do more than remove mountains,—it can bid away the load of sin lying on the conscience and the heart. "We are justified by faith," says Paul (Rom. v. 1); "It purifies the heart," says Peter (Acts xv. 19); "It worketh by love," says Paul in another epistle (Gal. v. 6); "It overcometh the world," says John (v. 4). It is by it we are lifted above the trials of this world and prepared for death and heaven.

### III.

#### THE RELATION OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH TO EACH OTHER.

Theologians have disputed as to whether faith comes before repentance, or repentance comes before faith. Something may be said in favor of each side. It is urged that there can be no repentance till the soul has turned to God by faith. On the other hand, it is argued that there cannot be forgiveness, which implies faith, without repentance. The conclusion I draw is, that the two come together, and are inseparable; that there is never faith without repentance, and never repentance without faith. They are the two essential elements in the state of the soul as it turns to God. Each tends to produce, and in

fact implies, the other. The sinner will not be apt to have faith till he sees his sins; and, on the other hand, faith in the holy God will constrain him to repent. It has to be added that sometimes the one of these is the stronger, and sometimes the other. I have known cases in which the sense of sin was so deep that the person had difficulty in appropriating by faith the mercy of God, — had only, as it were, a glimpse of the sun through a thick cloud. In other cases the faith has looked so intently on the light that it does not notice the darkness. But in all genuine conversions each element is present, and exercising power. Faith brings us to the mercy-seat to confess our sins, but there cannot be genuine confession without repentance. Faith could not be accepted if the sinner did not come confessing his sin and repenting of it; and repentance could not be real and true if it did not bring the sinner by faith to the foot of the cross for pardon and for peace.

The difference between them is indicated very expressively in the apt words employed in the text. The repentance is "towards God;" the faith is "towards the Lord Jesus Christ." Both are towards God; but the one looks more towards God the just and the holy One, the governor and judge of the world, whose law has been broken; the other is towards God in Christ, who is reconciling the world unto himself. Repentance looks primarily and mainly to the sin, to the law broken, to God offended, to the ingratitude

and rebellion displayed and the guilt contracted; faith looks more eagerly to the salvation provided and offered, to God pacified towards us, to the blood that was shed, to the fulness and sufficiency of the atonement, to the promises, exceeding great and precious, offered us. The one looks down to the sins in the soul, like as the children of Israel, when bitten by serpents, may have looked to the wounds in their prostrated bodies; the other looks to the Saviour lifted up, as the children of Israel looked to the serpent of brass which Moses raised by the command of God. The one looks back upon the past, mourns over it, and turns away from it; the other gazes forward into the future, and prompts us to go on in the path which leads to purity and to heaven.

Each serves a purpose. Faith brings us to the mercy-seat; but it is to confess our sins and to weep there, and find relief in consequence. Repentance acknowledges the guilt, and would break the hardness of the heart, which, however bruised, will not be melted except under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Repentance is the ploughing of the ground which needs to be torn up, while faith sows the living seed which strikes out roots and grows in the pulverized soil. When the sower casts in his seed, he looks for two accompaniments, — for showers and for sunshine; we should pray for like attendants when the seed of the Word is cast into our hearts. If we have faith, let us seek to have repentance also, to give religion a deeper place in our souls. If we

have repentance, let us by all means add faith, that it may lift us to a higher level. If either were alone, it would not accomplish its intended end. Repentance by itself should be despair, and would prostrate the energies. Faith, if alone, might be tempted into vainglory, and land us in difficulties and inconsistencies, and we should fall into the mistake of the person mentioned in ancient fable, who in looking up to the stars fell into the ditch. I would not say that any one has too much faith, or that any one has too much repentance; but the Christian character is so far distorted in its form when there is faith without a due balance of repentance, or a repentance without a faith to stimulate it. I have known genuine Christians who were forever writing bitter things against themselves, and thereby imbittering their lives, souring their temper, and narrowing their influence. These persons need to have their faith exercised and their eye upturned. On the other hand, I have known Christians who were self-confident and flighty, and were tempted in consequence into presumption, the precursor of a fall, whereby they lost the confidence of their fellow-men. This, I suspect, is the cause why some have to be visited with affliction to humble and restrain them. Faith is the sail that catches the breath of heaven, while repentance is the ballast which gives us stability in the voyage; and by the two we are made to pursue the steady course. The Christian character is the strongest when the two are happily combined,—when the firm

and the flexible are united; when the bones are clothed with muscle and flesh. It is the most lovely when the darker hues of penitence run through the brighter colors of faith.

The company which no man can number, who stand before the Lord and sing his praises, may be supposed to consist of two bands mixed through and through each other. There are those pure and holy ones who need no repentance, for they have not transgressed at any time God's commandments; and with them those who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb. I have an idea that these last utter the deeper, the mellower, and more tender tones in the choral harmony of heaven. As they look they behold him that sitteth on the throne; but their eye is specially fixed on the lamb that was slain, in the midst of the throne of God, and their song is to him who washed them from their sins in his own blood.

## THE SYROPHENICIAN WOMAN.

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. And he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away ; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord : yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. — MATT. xv. 21-28.

**I**N studying the life of our Lord we may derive much instruction from his manner of acting, as well as from his conversations and more systematic discourses. In saying so, I do not refer to the example he has set us that we should follow his steps, so much as to the divine skill and tact, knowledge and love, shown in every minute incident of his life. By noticing the special manner of his conduct in particular circumstances we may obtain a greater acquaintance with the combined wisdom and tenderness of Jesus, and a deeper insight into the workings

of the human heart. Every act of his life and its special mode of performance is worthy of him who under the influence of love came from heaven to instruct us. Every word is precious; to adopt the image employed by the woman of Canaan, every crumb that falls from this master's table may feed us. We shall find abundant illustration of this as we proceed to the consideration of our Lord's interview with the woman of Canaan.

v. 21. "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." It is not for us to presume to point out all the reasons which induced Jesus to retire at this time beyond the Jewish territory. He may have wished to retreat for a season from the gaze of the inhabitants of Judea and Galilee, from the idle admiration of some and the enmity of others, and to give them space to reflect on the sublime doctrine they had heard and the wonders they had seen. But whatever other considerations may have weighed with him, we can conceive that he had it specially in view, in passing this once beyond the Jewish territory, to show that the benefits to be derived from his mission were not to be confined to the children of Abraham, but to be extended to the nations of the earth. He now passes beyond the limits of Judea and extends his blessings to a person of a different race; and all to prepare the way for the full manifestation of that gospel which is to be preached to every creature.

v. 22. "And behold a woman of Canaan came out

of the same coasts, and cried unto him." These may seem at the first look to be contradictory statements as to the race and nation of this woman; but they can easily be reconciled. This woman is said, in the corresponding passage of Mark's Gospel (vii. 26), to have been a Greek. The Jews at that time were in the way of dividing mankind into Jews and Greeks, and called all heathens by the name of Greeks, whatever might be their extraction. Taking the epithet "Greek" in this sense, we are to take it as denoting that the woman was a foreigner, and had been an idolater. From the same passage we learn that she was a Syrophenician, — "a Greek, a Syrophenician," — or an inhabitant of that part of Syria called Phenice. From the passage before us in Matthew, we learn that she was a Canaanite, or a descendant of that race which had been devoted to destruction by the Lord, and who had been the foes of God's ancient people. Though the command had been to root them out of the land, several tribes had been allowed to remain, where for ages they were thorns in the sides of the children of Israel. It is necessary to bear these facts in mind in order to the full comprehension of our Lord's conduct on this occasion. The woman who addressed our Lord was not only of an alien race, but of that race which was viewed with peculiar feelings of jealousy and enmity by the Jews, and she had been a heathen bowing down before dumb images, the workmanship of men's hands.

Somehow or other, we are not told how, light had begun to dawn upon this woman's mind. As living on the very borders of the land of Judea, she may have become acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures; some friend may have opened to her this treasure, out of which she may have drawn for instruction and comfort. Her attention may have been directed to the new teacher who had appeared in these parts, by the belief, then universally prevalent, that some prince or deliverer was to come out of Judea; or a report may have been brought her of the wonders which he had been performing in the immediately adjoining region. The simple but appropriate expression of her faith with which she introduces herself, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David!" shows that she had attained some acquaintance with the character and mission of the expected One. By the blessing and grace of God her knowledge may have been kindled into faith, and the spark of faith kindled into a flame by the fiery trial to which she had been subjected, being a tyranny of evil powers over the mind and body of her child manifested in madness and bodily distemper. "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." The very malady with which her daughter had been visited showed that she lived in an extraordinary age in the world's history, and seemed to indicate the coming of an extraordinary deliverer. She is prepared to recognize the prince foretold and expected, and as the very Saviour that her

urgent case required, and so she runs to him and cries, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David!"

Some of those now present have felt themselves or may now feel themselves placed in a position resembling in some respects that of the woman of Canaan. You may have been grieved with the waywardness and folly of some one in whom you feel an interest, but whom Satan has been leading captive at pleasure; or, feeling the power of sin in your own hearts and fearing the consequences, lashed by the reproaches of conscience, and in dread of descending judgments, you may be longing to be freed from the chains that bind you. Like the woman of Canaan you have heard of Jesus; many a time has a mother recommended him to you; you have read of him in the Scriptures; ministers of religion and teachers have been speaking of the riches of his grace and the efficacy of his blood. You have felt at a certain time in the past, or you do now feel to some extent, your need of him; perhaps breathings for something better than this world can give, say for higher wishes and tastes, and for greater security; or perhaps compunctions and fears have risen up in your minds, you know not how. The business of life cannot scatter them; the pleasures of this world cannot charm them away. They raise their still small voice as opportunity for reflection comes, as soon as the noise of folly ceases. Discovering that you need something to satisfy the wants of your immortal soul,

you would venture to apply to Christ. You, above others, ought to look to the conduct of the Canaanite, for it should be yours. You ought to consider the conduct of the Saviour in this interview, for it may have been the same towards you in the past, or it may be the same towards you for the present. The reception which Jesus gave her was apparently unkind, and her entreaties were met by repeated refusals.

#### FIRST REFUSAL.

“He answered her not a word.” Why, we ask, should the Saviour have given her so cold a reception? How are we to reconcile this with the usual gentleness and loveliness of his character? On other occasions he was ready to sympathize with affliction under every form. We read that they brought to him the sick, the maimed, and the blind, and he healed them all. On many occasions he answered them before they called, and heard them while they were yet speaking to him. They did not need to lift their voice; they had only to touch the hem of his garment, and as many as touched the hem of his garment were made whole.

Moved by grief of every kind, he was peculiarly susceptible of being touched by scenes of domestic sorrow arising from the distress of relatives and friends. We have an account, for example, of his raising the dead on three several occasions, and in each case it was in compassion towards sorrowing

relatives. It was when Jairus pleaded in behalf of his daughter with the importunateness of an afflicted father, that he first conquered the king of terrors; and in dismissing the others from the apartment, he allowed the father and mother to remain, that they might see the first symptoms of returning animation, and not be kept one instant in suspense. It was as he saw a mother following the bier of her son,—he the only son of his mother and she a widow,—that he wrought the second time the miracle of raising the dead. He instantly stopped the bier, and hastened to restore the youth to the embraces of his mother. Again, it was when his heart was being wrung with the pleadings of Martha and Mary, that he raised their brother Lazarus from the dead. The great Deliverer, who could without being oppressed bear the burden of a world's sins, on this occasion groaned in spirit and was troubled. We do not read of his shedding tears upon the cross, when his body was being torn and tortured; the tears which he shed were over the grave of a friend. "Jesus wept."

Now, we expect him to be moved by like feelings, and to act in a similar manner, when the woman of Canaan pleaded so earnestly for her grievously afflicted daughter. We are astonished when we read that he answered her not a word. He did not give her so much as a kind word or a friendly look. He pursued his journey as if her voice had never reached his ear, or as if his heart were steeled against her complaint.

Why this coldness and indifference? Did he think he had done enough for careless and ungrateful man? No, he blessed those who cursed him; and it was for the very purpose of benefiting those who were insensible to the goodness bestowed upon them, that he left the Father's bosom. Or was it that his bodily frame was weary with the journey? No, his bodily strength might be spent, but not his love, which is infinite, like all his other perfections. When oppressed with the heat and burden of the day, he gave living water to the woman at the well of Samaria. He did not give a word of comfort to this afflicted woman; and yet when his body was in torture he said to the dying malefactor, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Or was it that his gentle spirit had been soured by the indifference shown, and chafed by the opposition he had met with? We cannot for an instant entertain that supposition of him from whom all the execrations of his persecutors could only call forth this prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Why, then, this indifference real or apparent? We think we can discover two considerations which when combined will explain this conduct.

First, this woman was not of the commonwealth of Israel. She was by birth a Gentile, and had been trained to the practice of idolatry. Now, there is an order and a progression in the administration of God, of which we may not always see the meaning, but

which has always a reason in the wisdom and goodness of God. In the good government of God it had been settled that the offer was to be made first to the Jews, to whom pertained "the adoption, the covenant, and the promises." Here we have the first instance of aid invoked of Jesus by one not a Jew by birth or by profession, or a worshipper of the true God. It was expedient, when the dispensation of grace was to go beyond Israel, to justify the first exercise of it by the urgency of the case, and also to save the credit and honor of the Jewish economy, and to connect it with and make it an introduction to the wider and more philanthropic system now to be introduced. When a Gentile is now to be admitted to the full blessings of the gospel, it is expedient to show that it is in consequence of faith being found in the applicant greater than that of the Jews. It was in order to call forth and manifest and strengthen this woman's faith, that our Lord put it to this trial.

This was one reason to be found in the general providence of God. But this, it may be said, was scarcely a reason to this individual believer. We may, I think, discover another reason in the particular providence of God. We sometimes hear people talking of there being a general but not a particular providence, meaning a general oversight of the whole, but not a particular providence over particular events and individual men. Now, I believe in both a general and a particular providence. I believe that the two — the general and the particular —

coincide and are the same. The providence of God becomes general by its embracing every particular. God has so arranged everything, that what is for the good of the whole is also for the good of every part; what is for the good of the whole church is also for the good of every believer, and what is for the good of the individual believer is also for the good of the church at large. God has so ordered his providence that no one can face God and say, I have been obliged to suffer persecutions and humiliations which are not for my own good, but merely for that of the church or the world. To one using that language I would say, you know not yourself as you ought, or you would discover that these trials were also for your own good. They may also have some bearing on the church at large, or that of your circle, or your relatives and friends; but they are also for your own advantage. So nicely adjusted, so delicately hung is the government of God, that the interest of every individual believer is linked with the good of all others. No man is required to suffer merely for the sake of others; his crosses and disappointments may also be the means of promoting his own individual welfare. The Saviour answered her not a word; not only because it was the ordinance of Heaven that the Gospel should first be proclaimed to the Jews, but further, because the delay in granting the request tended to draw forth and confirm her faith. As we proceed with the narrative we shall discover how this latter effect was produced.

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In the mean time, I ask whether God has not seemed at some particular time or times to act in the same way towards you. Under feelings of excitement or of anxiety you spread out your case before God and cried for mercy. You had heard of the love of Jesus and the promises of the gospel so free and full, and you were sure of an immediate and sensible answer. You thought that God would at once give you peace, and put you in full possession of the joys of the Christian. But you find, instead, that fears are agitating you, that the conscience is reproaching you. In short, you discover no sensible answer to your prayers. The heavens continue shut and silent. Jesus answers you not a word. Brethren, do not therefore doubt of the efficacy of prayer, as you may be tempted to do in such circumstances, or of the power or mercy of Jesus. I beseech you to attend to the remainder of this narrative: it is written for your instruction and comfort.

We almost expect to hear of the Canaanite losing all her faith and courage upon being met by this silent denial, which seemed more discouraging than an open refusal. She is not even dismissed with a word or look of interest in her case. We almost expect to find this afflicted woman hastening to her home in anger or despair, to bury her cares in solitude. But she gave way to no such temptations. As she thought of that home, it brought to her mind only the recollection of the incoherences of that frenzied daughter, once, it may be, her hope and

pride. She knew that there was power in the Saviour; she believed that under an indifferent look there might be gentleness and love. Undeterred by obstacles, she continued crying even at the risk of receiving a second and more hopeless refusal. That refusal she received.

#### SECOND REFUSAL.

"His disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us [v. 23]. But he answered and said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Her cries, it would appear, had awakened some compassion in the hearts of the apostles, in spite of their narrow Jewish prejudices; but it does not seem as if they had raised any such feeling in the breast of Jesus. It looks as if when the disciples became intercessors, it was only to confirm his indifference, and make her case more hopeless. The prayer of the apostles procured what her cries had not, — an answer; but that answer seemed to shut and lock forever the door of mercy. "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It is as if he had said, "I am sent, but not to thee; thou art lost, but I am not come to find thee; thou art comfortless, but I cannot be thy friend; I am full of mercy, but it cannot be extended to thee. The decrees of heaven, the counsels of God, and the good of the church all forbid it." Ah, wretched woman! ah, daughter of an accursed race! thy cries are in vain, — they are fool-

ish; they only fret thy patience. You may cease from your wailings and return to your comfortless home to listen to the foolishness and to the chidings of your frenzied daughter.

My friends, it is possible that God may seem in a time past, or at this present time, or at some future time, to act towards you in much the same way. When you cry to him, so far from answering you, he may only be hiding his face in deeper clouds. You pray for light, but in looking round the whole horizon you do not discern a single streak; you see only gathering and thickening darkness. You look for peace; but instead, your aroused conscience tells you more emphatically of your sins. Nay, you find everything against you,—temptations laid in your way, and fate as it were opposing you. You hear as it were God saying that he cannot receive you; that his decree is against you. Oh, my friends, when you are thus tempted to despair, and to cast yourselves away in the thought that you are lost at any rate, we beseech you to follow a little farther the conduct of this woman! The narrative is exactly suited to your case, and may providentially be cast in your way.

For you observe that this second cold reception did not damp the courage of this wonderful woman. It required, indeed, some ingenuity to discover that our Lord's language did not imply an absolute and unalterable denial: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It required some

sagacity as well as strong faith to discover that the words did not render all further entreaty utterly vain. But it has often been remarked that earnestness always rouses and quickens all the energies of the mind. How often have I found a young man coming to the use of his faculties for the first time when visited with some affliction, say on his being crossed by some disappointment in life,—by the death of a father, or the loss of some long-expected honor; at such a crisis he was made to feel his position, and to devote his whole soul to the recovering his ground. Thus it is that I have seen conversion, that is, faith, awaken the powers that before lay dormant. If it does not strengthen the natural faculties of the mind, it at least directs them better and with force towards a higher end. True, she might argue that Jesus was not sent with the precise view of preaching to the Gentiles; but he was a son, not a servant, and might extend his commission into other and not inconsistent fields. True, he was not sent, but could he refuse one who came to him? She may have read in the Old Testament of Elijah visiting these coasts and blessing a poor widow of Zarephath, and she may have heard of Elisha curing the leprosy of the Syrian captain. She may have heard of the success of the woman of Samaria, to whom, though she was not of the seed of Abraham, Jesus had given living water. Whether she thought of all these things or no, her case was urgent, and she persevered in her quest. She may have had hope raised and sustained

by that very one who seemed to be so frowning upon her. Thinking that before, while she cried for herself and her daughter, she may have been deficient and guilty in not paying the adoration and worship that were due to him with whom she was dealing, "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." But even this prostration and this adoration were unavailing. Her importunity only led to a

#### THIRD REFUSAL,

in which there seemed to be not only coldness and indifference, but even harshness and contempt. (*v.* 26) "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." Before, Jesus seemed to tell her of the impossibility of extending mercy to her, but now he speaks to her in the language of disdain. The Jews children, and her race dogs! What language to come from the promised Saviour! Ah, ill-fated woman, thy complaints bring no pity; they only expose thee to insults. Better at once return to thy home and listen to the idle tale, the wild merriment or sadness of thy frenzied daughter, than thus expose thyself in public to one who adds reproach to misery, and contempt to suffering.

Possibly some of you, my friends, have gone as far as this woman in begging mercy from God. You have come to him again and again for peace and assurance and comfort, but he seems to be taking no notice of you. Your prayers vanish into air like

your breath, and bring no return. He has answered you not a word. You persevered only to find that instead of encouraging you he has only placed difficulties in your way. Overcoming these, you bowed yourself more reverently, but he has only made you feel your own weakness. You expected to be delivered from fear and all sense of sin, only to find your convictions more numerous and poignant. Instead of being able to look on your sins as cast into the depths of the sea, you see them rising before you as waves swelling one beyond the other. You begin to doubt whether you can be saved at all, your sins are of so deep a dye, and God is so charging you with them. You come to the conclusion that never so great a sinner has been saved. There may, my friends, be something hopeful in these dark views of sin which God is giving you. Do not, we implore you, give yourselves up for lost, or allow yourselves to be tempted into hopelessness and ungodliness. This is the issue to which Satan would drive you; but this is not the end designed by Jesus in dealing with you. Look once more to this earnest woman. Prove the Lord this other time, and see if he will not open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing so that there will not be room to receive it.

In the answer of the Canaanite we have another illustration of the acuteness and sagacity which true faith communicates. She knows that Jesus would never apply to her language which she did not deserve. What other epithet could she merit, who

had worshipped dumb images and broken the holy law of God? She acknowledges the fitness of the Divine procedure, more particularly in the plan of communicating salvation through the Jews. She puts in her plea on that very plan, and on the very supposition that she is unworthy. She avails herself of the distinction which our Lord had pointed out, and in a reply unsurpassed for simplicity, aptness, and beauty by any handed down to us from any age of the world, she said, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the children's table." First, she had implored; she continued to implore in spite of discouragement; now, she worships and implores: she pays becoming reverence, and pleads, having all the essential parts of prayer in this brief sentence. She honors Christ's truth and faithfulness, "Truth, Lord," and yet refers to his abundant grace, and argues from the very abundance of the grace that there would be enough for her. Her view was much the same with that of the prodigal when he came to himself, and in the midst of his misery began to remember his father's house, and to think that there was in it bread enough and to spare. It is as if she had said, I am unworthy, you might justly cast me off in disdain, but with the Lord there is plenteous redemption; there is enough and to spare on that table which thou hast furnished in the wilderness; enough of the very richest dainties for all thy children, and crumbs to fall to a poor sinner such as I am.

Behold now the blessed result (v. 28): "Jesus answered and said, Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Jesus sent her away not only with the assurance that her daughter was cured, but with an increase of saving faith. This woman would have been contented with the crumbs, with the healing of her daughter; but Christ took her to his table and gave a feast to her soul. She came for one blessing, and she went away with two; the one that was added being greater than that which she asked. She was like the paralytic who was brought to have his body healed, and went away with his sins pardoned also. So true is it that God blesses his people exceeding abundantly above what they can ask or think. This woman returned to her household rejoicing in spirit to welcome her daughter, now in the vigor of health, in the sprightliness of youth, and in soundness of mind, and the first time for years pouring forth the affection of a daughter into the delighted ear of a mother who had so long received no intelligent answer in return. As the two spoke of the breaking of the fetters which had bound soul and body, would the mother not also speak of another and a spiritual thralldom held over the soul by Satan, and of another freedom, — the freedom of those whom the truth has made free? Would she not tell how Jesus in releasing the daughter from one bondage had relieved the mother from another and

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a more fearful; and would she not recommend this other as infinitely the more precious of the two? And in speaking and recommending to her daughter that Saviour who had visited their coasts, would she complain of his rudeness and harshness? Would she not rather dwell on the glorious issue, in the blessing conveyed both to mother and daughter? Ever in her future life, when her spirit was harassed by trial or oppressed with fear, she would remember how the Lord had dealt with her, and the recollection would bear her up and cheer her through life and in death, till she was taken up to everlasting fellowship with Jesus in heaven.

1. We see the advantage of sincerity. This woman was in earnest, and therefore she succeeded. Many are not sincere in the petitions they put up. They would be disappointed if their prayers were answered. They pray for grace to make them better, but they do not wish to be made better. They ask for holiness, but they do not wish to become holy. Oh that we had but a little of that earnestness in asking which Christ has in beseeching us to accept! Oh that we the beggars had a little of that eagerness which the benefactor has in pressing his gifts upon us! If we only had this, he would bless us above what we can ask or think.

2. We see the need of importunity. The kingdom of heaven is taken by violence. We are not to give up because of one or two or three seeming denials. We are to ask, — how long? till we receive. We

are to seek,—how long? till we find. We are to knock,—how long? until it be opened unto us. We say to you who may have asked without feeling that you have got an answer, “You should have asked more earnestly and repeatedly.” We are to wrestle with God, as Jacob did, “until the breaking of the day,” until “the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.”

## MAN'S TENDENCY TO TRUST IN HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. — ROM. x. 3.

**M**AN by nature is constantly laboring under two somewhat conflicting feelings.

### I.

*He feels that he is under law to God.* He knows that there is a power above him to which he is subject,—a God to whom he must give an account. The thought is ever pressed upon him, and he cannot be rid of it. He may try to deliver himself from it, and to claim an absolute independence of all authority. But ever and anon there is a check laid upon him. He is made to see that there is a moral law asserting its claims, commanding him to do this and avoid that. He may refuse to obey it, only to find that it imposes a penalty in the shape of a reproach of conscience, or of a disappointment, the thwarting of his plans, or some kind of suffering. He may not notice it in the day, with its glare, its bustle, and its pleasures; but it will be apt to steal

upon him in the quiet and silence of the night. He may drown its voice by the noise of folly, but it will take its revenge when the hour of reflection comes, and he has to look back on the past or forward to the future. Under this feeling every man is made to realize that he should appear before God to offer him something, say worship and adoration, — gifts as a thank-offering, and specially obedience as due to the governor. The presentiment is deep: "so then every one must give an account of himself to God."

## II.

*There is a fear in every one that his conduct cannot stand a sifting inspection.* So he has an apprehension at times that the power above him may be a power hostile to him. We are obliged to look on God and on his law as holy, just, and good. We know that this law requires us to love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. We are conscious that we have not done this, — that we have not loved God, that we have not loved our fellow-men, as we should have done. Our own consciences condemn us, and we cannot but see that God, who is above our conscience and who is purer than our conscience, must also condemn us. So we shrink from the law with its brightness, from God with his purity, as weak eyes do from the light. "When I remembered God, I was troubled." We are troubled, as the boy is by the presence of his father whose

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command he has just disobeyed; as we are troubled, or ought to be troubled, by the accusations of one whom we have injured. We strive to press down the thought, as bringing up our sins before us, and as lowering us in our own estimation; but it will rise up in spite of all our efforts to suppress it. So in consequence of the pressure of these two feelings on each other a third feeling is brought forth. This may be one or other of two sorts.

### III.

*We may banish God and his law from our thoughts.* This may be our first impulse. We act as the child does who first disobeys his father and then flees from him; runs away from his house to hide himself, or engages in some employment in which he may earn a livelihood and be independent. It was thus that Cain, after having yielded to guilty passion and slain his brother, went out from the presence of the Lord,—that is, as I understand it, left the place where God made his presence specially known, where our first parents had the family altar and worshipped, and became a fugitive and a vagabond, engaging himself in building a city and other enterprises, but banished from the face of God, with the brand on his brow and without peace in his heart. It was thus that Jonah, the rebellious prophet, refused to obey God when commanded to declare God's message to Nineveh, where he would have met with

opposition and endangered his life, and then tried to flee from God by betaking himself to a ship of Tarshish, which he expected to carry him away to a heathen country where might be nothing to remind him of God and of his sin. It is thus that men first disobey God, and then go out from his presence, and flee from him, and betake themselves to scenes which may engross their minds and enable them to forget God and the duty they owe to him. True, they will not be able to banish God altogether from their thoughts. There will be times when God appears to them, to allure them or to warn them; but, alas! they do not wish to be disturbed, and they pray to him, as the Gadarenes did, when Jesus visited them, to "depart out of their coasts;" and he left them, never to return. How much happier those who are caught as Jonah was by winds and waves, and made to come back to the place from which they fled, and to the work which they refused at first to undertake!

But there is another class of people who act in a different and in an equally unworthy manner. These are specially referred to in our text.

#### IV

*They are going about to establish their own righteousness.* Those of whom I now speak, and to whom I am now speaking, know that God requires his intelligent, his moral and responsible creatures

to give obedience to his law, which is the royal law of love, and to present this as a righteousness in order to be accepted of God. In the ancient church the worshipper did not come empty-handed; he brought of the first fruit of the ground and the firstlings of his flocks. So the intelligent creature must present a righteousness. According to the first covenant every man was to work out a righteousness for himself. But man has failed in this; he is not able to present a perfect obedience. He has only to search himself, and look with candor on his conduct, to discover that he has sinned. But then he would do better in future. He would make amends for the evil he has done. So he begins the work, and is going on with it. He is diligent in the work, and he is persevering. He is *going about*, is the expressive phrase, to establish a righteousness of his own. Perhaps one laborious act after another is undertaken to accomplish this end. From day to day there is an anxiety to add act upon act to make up the sum. Possibly I may be speaking to the experience of some now present. Certainly I am speaking, as I commonly do in my preaching, from my own experience and to my own experience.

Let us view the self-righteous man as he goes about so diligently in working out a righteousness of his own. Let us listen to him as he talks to himself, not in words which others can hear, but in the chamber of his thoughts. Every supposed righteous deed is followed by a supplement or echo; How ex-

cellent is this deed ; how good I am ! When he does a smart act, he as it were says, How clever I am ! When he makes a shrewd remark, How wise I am ! When he ventures on a bold act, How great my courage ! is the language which expresses what he feels. He is led to relieve distress, and it is followed by the thought, How tender-hearted I am ! He is able to give a sum, it may be a small one, in charity, and he congratulates himself on being so benevolent. He engages in a religious service, and then feels that he is so pious. He rises from his knees and he retires from the house of God and the religious meeting satisfied with himself, and feeling as if he had laid up some merit of supererogation. The business man, the lawyer, the doctor, the farmer, the tradesman, the very minister of religion, when they are successful in what they do, are tempted to take the whole credit to themselves, and give no praise to God, who has given them continued life and health and friends and opportunities. The self-righteous man thus passes through life, like the statues of the gods in the processions of the heathen temples, listening to an anthem of praise in favor of his own virtues.

This self-righteousness is all along offensive to God. As it is cherished, it becomes a conceit of ourselves and of our supposed good deeds, and this is apt to be offensive to our fellow-men. It shows itself in a haughty look and manner, in boastings and swelling words, and in the perpetual narratives of our

ability and prowess. Knowing that mankind generally do not like to hear people praising themselves, there are some who have the prudence to restrain the manifestations of their self-adulation; still, it is there in the bosom, ready to burst out from time to time and expose the parties to dislike and it may be to ridicule. The true way to undermine this offensive conceit is to remove that self-righteous, self-adulatory spirit from which it proceeds.

It is recorded in the life of the author of a once very popular book, Hervey's "Meditations among the Tombs," that as he was walking in his parish he fell in with one of his people engaged in ploughing, and addressed him to the effect that it was our first duty at once to abandon our sins. The ploughman answered, "There is a prior duty; and that is, to abandon the trust in our own righteousness." There was true philosophy in this. As long as we are trusting in our own righteousness we have little motive to search out our sins and destroy them. Let a man feel that his deeds are as filthy rags before God, that they cannot justify him, and then he will be disposed to give them up and seek for a better clothing. To part with a trust in our supposed good works is a first step towards our undertaking truly good works.

This self-righteous spirit is that of the Pharisees, so severely condemned by our Lord. It is embodied in the prayer, "Lord, I thank thee, because I am not as other men, or as this publican." It was the spirit of the Stoic sect, which seized on some of the

highest minds in ancient Greece and Rome. The Stoics were in many respects the highest moralists of heathen antiquity. The meditations of the great emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus contain very lofty moral precepts, but his ethics are self-righteous throughout; the good man stands before God in the strength of his own merits. This being so, we can understand how the philosophers of this school should have been unwilling to submit to the humbling doctrines of the Cross, which require us to trust in the righteousness of another. We can understand how the self-righteous Stoics should have joined with the pleasure-loving Epicureans in opposing Paul's preaching at Athens. We can thus explain what seems to many so curious, that Marcus Aurelius, with all his morality, should have persecuted the Christians, it seemed so unworthy that the Christians should have trusted in any righteousness but their own.

What a humiliation must it have been to Saul of Tarsus, when he was arrested on the road to Damascus, when not only his person but his pride was cast down to the ground. He was full of a sense of his own merits and importance. He regarded himself as prosecuting an excellent cause in putting down the new sect of the Christians. He was confidently expecting to reach thereby the very highest moral eminence, and to have a title to the greatest rewards in this life and in the life to come. How was all this loftiness and self-sufficiency brought low when

he heard the voice addressed to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He expected to enter Damascus in the exercise of high authority to extinguish the new sect which preached repentance and humility. He had, instead, to be led into that city blind and helpless; and he got relief only from one of those whom he meant to put into prison. But his humiliation was a step necessary in order to his exaltation. From this spot where he fell to the ground he rose up and started on a new career, and produced a mightier effect on the character of the world than all the philosophers of Greece, than all the conquerors of Rome. And how was he able to accomplish this? What was the secret of his strength? He gave up trusting in his own righteousness, and went forward in the strength of Him who there and then conquered him, and thereby enabled him to conquer himself, and sent him forth to proclaim a doctrine which conquered the Roman world. Every man needs to pass through such a crisis if he would have his natural self-righteousness humbled. Those who feel that they do not need it, are those who need it most; they do not feel their want, because they are so puffed up with their self-sufficiency. It is for his good that every man should be humbled before God, that he should be humbled in his own eyes, and it may be in the view of his fellow-men. When he is humbled, then is he exalted.

As long as the man is cherishing a self-righteous spirit, he feels himself hindered and restrained on

all hands. He cherishes a sense of merit, and yet is not satisfied. He makes new and greater exertions, only to find that they do not come up to the full requirements of the law.

Perhaps there are some here who are trying to stand on their own merit, or to save themselves. They fall into some folly; but then, they will make amends, they will restore themselves. Alas! it may be only to stumble and fall again. Meanwhile, there is nothing in their efforts to make atonement for the sins which they acknowledge to have committed, to bring forgiveness from God or impart peace of conscience. The unforgiven sin will ever trouble the sinner till it is forgiven.

Perhaps there are some here who think to keep the whole law in the letter and the spirit of it. They proceed to do this earnestly, systematically, for hours, for days, for years, for half a lifetime. But there will be times when, in spite of their unwillingness to do so, they will be obliged to search into the nature and character of this obedience, and they will be forced to feel that there is something defective in it,—in the deed, or the motive from which it springs. They will realize at least that there is nothing in it to make atonement for the sins of which they have been guilty. But they will make one other struggle, and a great struggle. Then they look to see if the law is satisfied, and find they have to say, "I sought to do this," but "thy commandment is exceeding broad." Let us consider how broad it is. It requires love,

supreme love to God. We are to love the Lord with all our hearts; but the man finds that his obedience has not come up to this standard. It requires equal love to our fellow-men: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" but his love does not come up to this mark, and he is conscious of cases in which he has been guilty of selfishness or ill-will. What is he to do in these circumstances,—submit to privations, to tortures, to make atonement for transgressions? He will soon find these cannot make amends to the broken law, or give peace of conscience. Better at once give up the hopeless contest. The man climbs and climbs, in order to reach the summit, only to see it standing above him with dizzy precipices, and rocks ready to fall on him and crush him, with lightnings and thunders and tempests like Sinai. Better, I say, at once submit, and instead of the prayer of the Pharisee put up the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

As long as we are cherishing the legal spirit, the soul is as it were ice-bound, as the earth is in winter. When the ground is thus chilled with frost and covered with snow, we might try to soften the hardness and remove the cold by shovelling away the frost and snow. But there is a better way. Let us have the returning sun of spring, with its heat and its genial breath, and the coldness will disappear, and the earth will array itself in the loveliest green. So when we feel our hearts to be chilled and hardened, let us seek that the light of God's countenance shine

upon us, and the hardness will be dissolved, and the graces of peace and love will flow forth as the streams do in spring.

There may be some here sincerely anxious in a desire to become good, but they are hindered by a narrowness of heart and an aversion to spiritual things. They wonder how this should be. If they search sufficiently far down, they may find the cause of the whole in a self-righteous spirit unconsciously cherished. Can we bring water out of the rock? We shall find that we cannot; but when spoken to in the name of God, waters will flow out, as they did at Horeb. And now the bosom, pained though it may have been, finds relief. We have heard of the sorrowful spirit after the eyes had continued long dry, finding relief in a flood of tears. We have seen an angry sky discharging itself in showers, and then smiling in peace and loveliness. Of a like nature is the relief given when the soul, after having trusted in its own righteousness, casts itself on Jesus. The crowded bosom now finds an outlet, the confined heart experiences enlargement, and the fettered spirit is free. The feelings are now poured forth from the broken heart, like the ointment from the alabaster box when the woman that was a sinner broke it and poured the ointment on the feet of Jesus, and the odor was diffused around. So now we love much because much has been forgiven us. This love goes forth in what is called new obedience.

THE  
RELIEF AFFORDED BY CONFESSION.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. — Ps. xxxii. 1-5.

THIS is a psalm of praise; but of praise on the part of one who has come through a certain experience which is detailed for our benefit.

I.

*The Psalmist had kept silence.* There is a time to keep silence. It may be when God is speaking in the wonders which he works and the judgments which he inflicts; it is then our duty to listen. We read (Rev. viii. 1) that "there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." How long this half-hour in heaven's time lasted in earth's time we cannot tell, for heaven's chronometer is not the same with ours. "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." This silence

in heaven was on the occasion of the opening of the seventh seal, when the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound; "and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake." In the works of Nature there is silence when all things proceed regularly and benignantly. The sun, moon, and stars move, and the plants grow and bud and blossom, without noise. Silence is broken when things become deranged, and the tempest raves, and thunders utter their voices in order to restore the equilibrium. There is a time for man to be silent, when all is as it should be, and he has nothing to do but admire and adore. But there is a time for man to speak, and he cannot hold his peace without committing sin; there are calls, loud calls on the part of duty and of God, for man to speak out. When God is displaying his grandeur and crowning us with loving-kindness, then should our heart be filled with adoration and gratitude, and our mouth with praise. "Let the people praise thee, let all the people praise thee, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof." There are times when man cannot keep silence without contracting guilt. Living beings are exposed to danger, are rushing over a precipice, and we must needs warn them. Evil principles are inculcated, and we must meet the error. Evil practices are committed, and we must denounce them. Our children and those intrusted to our care are in danger of being seduced into sin, and we have to admonish them. Our friends

and companions are walking in the wrong path, and we should seek to bring them back. To refuse to speak in such circumstances is cowardice, and involves criminality.

It is clear that the Psalmist, in keeping silence, had been doing wrong. We can gather what it was that made him restrain utterance, and gave him such painfulness. We argue it from the way by which he got deliverance when he spoke out. He said, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." Sin had been committed, and the fruits were fermenting and fomenting in his bosom, gendering turmoil and breeding corruption. For a time he allowed it to dwell there, even as the Canaanites who had not been extirpated were allowed to dwell in the land of Caanan after the children of Israel had conquered it. "The Canaanites would dwell in that land; yet it came to pass when Israel was strong, they put the Canaanites to tribute." So sin will dwell in our souls, and we fondle and turn it into a means of enjoyment. We have not the courage to look at these sins as sins, and to cast them out from what ought to be the temple of the Lord. We try as far as possible not even to notice them. We prefer thinking of our supposed excellences, of the good deeds we have done, of our talents, courage, prowess, generosity, and roll these as a sweet morsel under our tongue. We decline thinking on the abuse made of the gifts bestowed

on us, — on our ingratitude, ungodliness, our lusts cherished, our envy, our evil temper, our selfishness. There will be times, indeed, when these iniquities are forced upon our attention by the accusations of conscience or the reproaches of our fellow-men, or by the troubles into which they bring us. But on these occasions we put ourselves on the defensive and parry off the attack; and when these weapons of defence are wrested from us, then we bring excuses and urge palliations referring to extenuating circumstances, or pleading seductions, or pointing to the fairer side of the offence, to the pleasure it gave, or the kindness or frankness which characterized it. Under such pretexts as these we keep silence when we should speak out, when we should confess the sin and acknowledge the transgression, cast them out from our hearts and slay them before the Lord.

## II.

*When he kept silence he was troubled.* He expresses himself strongly: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." There is a wasting of the strength; the "bones," the emblem of strength, "wax old." The same effect is produced as by a fever, in which there may be fierce struggling followed by exhaustion. The fire cannot get exit, and smoulders; and it burns and

blackens and consumes all within. There is no articulate voice, no confession to give relief, and so there is a "roaring all the day long," — the roaring as of a bull that is beaten, as of wind in a confined cavern, as of water boiling in a whirlpool. "All the day long," as the troubling element cannot find an outlet by which to discharge itself. In all this there may be more than mere human powers, than mere outbursts of feeling; there may be the hand of God lying heavy upon us. "Day and night." Yes; in the brightest day there may be the discharge of thunder from heaven. When I say, "My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than life. I loathe it; I would not live alway; let me alone; for my days are vanity." God is speaking in awful tones as at Sinai, with fire and blackness and darkness and tempest; or in tender tones through his Son, who did not strive, but was gentle unto all men, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But when there is "the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words," — it may be that when they thus hear the voice "they entreat that the word should not be spoken to them any more, for they cannot endure that which is commanded." There is a fight like that which we have witnessed between wild beasts in a cage from which none of them can escape. God's hand is heavy upon us.

God speaks. He speaks in the conscience, saying, this deed, this thought was evil. He speaks in the Word, saying, "The wages of sin is death." He speaks to us by his Spirit, striving to subdue the resistance. But the ear is stopped, that it may not hear; or when the voice is so loud that it cannot but be heard, no attention is paid to it, or it is openly disobeyed. There is now a terrible conflict. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold of me: I found trouble and sorrow." There is a voice commanding, but there is a determined effort to drown it, as loud and dismal as the sound of the gong which was used in Mexico to drown the cry of the tortured and bleeding human victims on the altar. What earnestness in the voice demanding, the voice entreating! but there is equal earnestness in the struggles resisting, and the hatred resenting. No wonder that "the moisture is turned into the drought of summer." For in such a wringing of the soul all life and hope are apt to be crushed out. The terrible heat, exceeding that of a tropical sun, burns up every living thing. The soul is left as an arid waste, without a scrap of vegetation. "He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." The heart resisting, and bent on turning back, is turned like Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, hard and acid; and it stands a visible memorial of the mercy of God despised, and looks as if it never could be melted.

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Is this stone of obstinacy and bitterness to stand there forever? Blessed be God, if there be a fire that hardens, there is a fire that melts. Let us pray, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth." Let us observe the blessed issue.

### III.

*The Psalmist confesses his sins.* "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord."

### IV.

*The Psalmist had his sins forgiven.* "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." I mean to treat of these two topics very much together.

When God's hand is laid heavily upon us, the object is to bring us down to our knees by the weight of it. So far as mere natural feelings and wishes are engaged in the struggle, they are busily employed in resisting each other, and thereby producing disturbance. But God's hand is heavy, and may be laid on so heavily that it overcomes all op-

position. This is the work to which our Lord refers when he promises when he "is come, he will reprove [or convince] the world of sin," adding, "of sin, because they believe not on me." The man has been made to see the dreadfulness of his condition, as it is in itself, as he feels it to be, and as it is in the sight of God. By the power above him and pressing on him he is made to yield and submit. He gives way under the hand laid heavily upon him, and which is pressing him down to his very knees. He is thus brought low that he may venture to look up. As he does so, he sees a reconciled face irradiated with smiles, and hears a voice pleading with him and beseeching him. But will the holy and offended God be gracious? May he not try him and prove him? Be the result what it may, he will venture. The pain, the discomfort, the misery are pressing him. The face is smiling, the voice is pleading. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" He cannot, he will not believe it. "And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." He can keep silence no longer. He feels that he must speak out. The power above and a power within constrain him. His dumb struggles, his senseless roaring are turned into an articulate voice: "Jesus, have mercy on me." The crisis

has come; the battle is fought; the victory is won. "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In obedience, the soul answers, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." "What, Lord, wouldst thou have me to do?" Repent and believe. The assent of the mind is gained, and the consent of the heart is added. "With the heart the man believeth, and with the tongue he maketh confession." The silence, so sulky, is broken: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." This voice of confession bursting the imprisoned heart pierces the clouds that have hitherto enveloped the heavens, and reaches the ear of the Father, and simultaneously there is a voice: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." "And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

There are not a few misapprehensions as to the nature of this forgiveness. Even those who know and feel that they need it, often do not know the way in which to find it, and so have to say, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" They have sinned, and so they acknowledge that they need forgiveness. But then they will repent, and so earn it. They have sinned, but they will make amends by their future conduct. They will pay for their pardon, and thus have a claim upon it. They will confess their transgressions unto the Lord, and this will make an offended God propitious. But it is not thus that God dispenses pardon, bartering it for something given

or done by us, and thus allowing us merit and a sense of merit. The forgiveness has been earned, has been bought by a great price by Christ's own blood, but it cannot be purchased by us by any works, by any sacrifices. It is presented as a free gift, and must be so accepted.

Few men are so ignorant or so hardened as to maintain that they have never committed sin. All who believe in a holy God must admit that they need forgiveness from him who cannot look on sin but with hatred and abhorrence. But men are not willing to part with a sense of merit. They will have the grace, but they must have some credit in it. So they will work, to make up for past neglect of work. They shall suffer for their sins, and so make atonement for them. They will submit and confess, and so appease the wrath of God. So they mix up their own righteousness with the righteousness of Christ. They will work, acknowledging their work to be imperfect, but expecting to have it perfected by the work of Christ. They will do so much, and Christ, out of pity for their weakness, will do the rest. Thus many toil for long years, for a lifetime, to work out a righteousness of their own. This is the avowed doctrine of the Church of Rome. Men must work, they say, and Christ's work will make theirs acceptable. But, my friends, peace can never be had on such a plan; for on it persons can never be sure that they have wrought enough to be received. After toiling for years in business, in study, in prayer, in

attendance on the forms of religion, they are made to feel that something is wanting. After climbing so long they see the unapproachable height above them unreachd and frowning upon them like Sinai with thunders and lightnings. After saying, "I have seen an end of all perfection," they are obliged to add, "but thy commandment is exceedingly broad," far beyond our power to compass it. But in all this we are setting up another gospel which is not the gospel of the grace of God. "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Cease, I beseech you, from these efforts to construct a righteousness of your own which will not amalgamate with the righteousness of Christ, and the idol you set up is like the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar: the toes being part of iron and part of clay, which did not cleave one to another, and the whole was "broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and no place was found for them." The gospel of God is not, Do so much, and Christ will complete your work; but it is on this wise: The work is completed. Christ could say, ere he died, "It is finished;" and now he says, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

We thus see the relation between the two things mentioned in this passage, — the confession of sin,

and the forgiveness of sin. We are not to understand that the confession can merit the forgiveness. The confession can no more merit the forgiveness than the forgiveness can merit the confession. Both are gifts of God, and so bound together that you cannot have the one without the other. An old author represents Christ as coming to us with a gift in each hand. In the one hand he holds out forgiveness, free forgiveness; in the other hand he holds out repentance and confession. If we begin to say, "We are very willing to take the one of these; we know we have sinned, and are most anxious to have the forgiveness; but as to this wringing repentance and its proper fruit, a humbling confession, we wish to avoid them," then Christ will give us neither. But if in simple faith we will only take both, we shall receive both "without money and without price." At the same instant that we break silence and cry in faith for mercy, Heaven also breaks the awful silence, and the mercy is bestowed and received.

There is an evident propriety in connecting the two—the forgiveness and confession—by a link which cannot be broken. The forgiveness cannot be had when there is no repentance and no confession. Till it is cast out by acknowledgment, the sin will abide in the heart as a dead load to sink it, as a putrid mass to corrupt it. It is when we acknowledge and cast out our transgressions that we find them forgiven. And what a relief to be thus delivered from

the burden! Such is the blessedness, when we give up the struggling, the "roaring all the day long," and break the silence; peace descends as a shower and waters the soul as a river. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold of me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." You remember that on a day much to be remembered in ancient Israel, the high priest, representing the people, and in the view of the people, did confess the sins of the children of Israel over the head of a scape-goat, which was immediately after led away into the wilderness and supposed to bear away the sins of the people. So let us confess the sins of the past, that they may not lie as a burden upon us, — the sins of our youth and the sins of our riper years, the sins of our thoughts, the sins of our tempers, the sins of our feelings, the sins of our conversation, the sins of our conduct, the sins of which we have been guilty in secret, when no human eye saw us, and the sins of which we have been guilty in the intercourse with our fellow-men, the sins of our daily duties, the sins of our holy things, — let us confess all these over Christ as the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; and as far as the east is distant from the west, so far will he remove all our transgressions from us.

Two points yet remain. We treat them together, as they are wrapped up in each other.

## V.

*There is the blessedness of the man whose sin is forgiven.* "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

## VI.

*The guile is taken out of the soul when it has acknowledged its transgressions and has its sins forgiven.* "In whose spirit there is no guile."

*The promise and assurance is blessedness.* "Blessed is the man." What does this mean? What is implied in *blessedness*,—the blessedness so often promised in the Psalms?

The man who is blessed has the favor of Heaven, and is receiving, and is entitled to receive, not of merit but of grace, benefits many and precious. Adopted into God's family, he has the privilege of sonship. We have access at any time to our Heavenly Father, once it may be offended, but now reconciled. "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." We reason, "If men who are evil know

how to give gifts unto their children, much more will our Father who is in heaven give all good things to them that ask him." "All good things" we are sure that we will get; all that is for our good, guidance, restraint, light, and peace. The night is past, the cloud is lifted, and we walk in the light,—in the light of God's countenance.

But who are thus blessed? They whose iniquities are forgiven. Till this is done, there is a sentence pronounced and a curse lying on us. It is in the form of a debt which we cannot pay; of a burden weighing heavily upon us. We apply for aid, and are told that the debt is not paid. We would walk and run, and find that we are bent down to the earth by the load. This will continue till the debt is paid, till the burden is removed; but then we can look up and behold our heavenly Father's face smiling on us. We can now say, "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" We can now look all men in the face. We add to our faith, virtue,—that is, courage. We are prepared to face the evil and follow the good, and we walk and run in the way of God's commandments. As long as sin is unconfessed, and therefore we may be sure unforgiven, there is deceit in us. We have first to defend ourselves from an accusing conscience. We begin with denying the offence, and then we palliate it. In doing this, we have to use pretexts and we follow crooked courses, and thus learn habits of self-deception. It is first self-deception; we deceive

ourselves. A profound writer remarks that having first deceived ourselves, all other deception becomes easy. We have to keep up fair appearances, and in order to this, to conceal and evade and put on disguises.

“ Oh, what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practise to deceive ! ”

As the process goes on there come equivocation, and in the end lying and hypocrisy. The result is a spirit of guile. We see this beginning even in children, in their exertions to conceal their faults and magnify their virtues, that thus they may stand high in the view of those with whom they come in contact. It comes out more conspicuously in schools and colleges where youths resort to a variety of means, it may be tricks, to keep up a false show in the view of their fellow-students and instructors. It is apt to become confirmed with advancing years and by professional work, and it may become a hardened cement in old age. Our state thus becomes like that in which our Lord found the temple at Jerusalem when he entered it and “ found there those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting.” We know what the Lord of the temple did on that occasion. “ He made a scourge of small cords, and drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen ; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables ; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence : make not my Father’s house a

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house of merchandise." Now, when Christ enters the heart of the sinner, which ought to have been his temple, he acts in much the same way when he finds it filled with worldly objects and defended by chicanery and deceit. He proceeds to purify it in the way we have been contemplating. His hand is heavy upon us, and all to press out the deceit. He reproves, he rebukes with all long-suffering, but with all faithfulness, till he wrings the acknowledgment from us, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord," followed by the assurance, "Thou forgavest me the iniquity of my sin."

And now the crowded bosom finds relief; the confined soul experiences enlargement; the fettered spirit is free; the gates of brass and the bars of iron are cut down; the prison doors are thrown open, and the soul walks at liberty and expatiates abroad, on before untrodden ground, and gazes on new and lovely scenes. New affections are called forth, and new-born feelings spring up. The evil humors have been let out, and the body feels health returning, and with health, motive and activity. The noise of bartering is hushed, and the merchandise is cast out, that the worship of God may proceed undisturbed, and pure sacrifices be offered, and the voice of prayer and praise rise to heaven. The fight is ended, and the victory is won. "The winter is over and gone," and with it the cold and frosts, and the time of the singing of birds is come, and the plants bud, and the flowers blossom and throw out

their perfume into the air, that it may be wafted all around. Iniquity has been committed, but is not "imputed." The sin is "covered," not allowed to remain as an offensive mass of putrefaction to spread malaria and weakness, temptation and corruption, but is covered out of sight, being cast into the great purifier,—the sea of Christ's blood. The conscience, the moral eye, is purged, and clearly discerns between the good and the evil, and being disgusted with the evil which has wrought such mischief, repels it as its worst foe, and swears (as Hannibal did) on the altar to wage eternal warfare against it.

This is the gospel method. It does not say to the helpless sinner, "Do this and live." This was the method with the first man, who did not do this, and so did not live. But it is, Here is life. "Live and do this." When Christ came into Peter's house, he found "his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever, and he touched her hand and the fever left her;" and then she arose and "ministered unto them." So Christ when he comes bids us arise, and we arise to serve him in the love of the heart and the obedience of the life.

Among other things driven out is the guile. We hate it because it has deceived us, and we feel that we can never put trust in it again. We have seen through its hollow pretences and its sophistic arguments. We know that it has been a liar from the beginning, and we refuse to listen to it. In the rectification of the soul the "crooked places" have been

made straight by our conquering and advancing Lord. The man has had power with God like Israel of old, and has prevailed, and now has become like Nathanael, an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. In the washing of regeneration the soul has been purified and whitened, and no pollution will remain on it. We have heard a better voice,—of him who hath delivered us out of the horrible pit and the miry clay into which the siren had allured us, and we are resolved to follow that voice whithersoever it may lead us; and it sets our feet on a rock, establishing our goings. We continue to hear the voice saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it;” and it conducts through sincerity and honesty to purity and heaven.

## THE CHANGE PRODUCED BY FAITH IN JESUS.

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. — 2 COR. iii. 18.

SUPPOSE we were required, wherever we happened to be, at home or abroad, in our own dwelling or among the works of Nature, to wear a thick veil over our eyes, how dim, how confused, and how perverted would be the view we should obtain of every object. Nothing would be seen by us in its own color or its proper form. We should look on the faces of our friends, and have a shadowy perception of the outline of their features; but we could discover no beaming smiles or expression of inward thought and feeling playing on their countenances. We might gaze on a landscape of bold mountains and grassy plains intersected by leaping streams and clothed with trees of richest verdure, and be conscious of nothing but a mass of shapes colored by the medium in which we viewed them, without order and without beauty. As long as our eyes were so covered, the brightest objects would seem to us stripped of all their lustre, the loveliest

prospects appear dark and dim, and we should grope at noonday as the blind grope in darkness.

Now such, according to Paul, is the unconverted Jew's apprehension of the meaning of the Old Testament. He cannot but understand some of the truths, but he sees them very obscurely and confusedly, and he is altogether blind to their spiritual power and expression. In short, he sees everything as through a veil. This illustration is set forth by the apostle in the second half of this chapter in a variety of lights, and with great beauty and felicity of language. When Moses came down from the mount in which he had conversed with God, his face shone with the reflection of the light of God's countenance, and he had to cover it with a veil; and Paul says, that to this day the same veil is over the writings of Moses when the children of Israel read them. It would also appear that the Jews were accustomed to cover their heads with a veil when the law was read in the synagogue worship. In allusion to this custom, Paul says that the veil is over not only their eyes, but their minds (*v.* 14): "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. . . . But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts."

This state of the unconverted Jew as here described is the natural condition of every man. Without any special Divine operation upon our hearts, we can

read the Scriptures and in some measure understand them and discover a number of their beauties. The man of poetical taste cannot but admire the lovely strains of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, or the rich imagery in which the speakers in the Book of Job and the prophet Isaiah clothe their thoughts and sentiments; the man of tender heart is constrained to weep over the tale of the sorrows of the Man of Sorrows; and the philosopher delights to expatiate in those fields of lofty speculation through which the apostle Paul conducts us with such powerful and gigantic strides. But there are higher beauties which are hidden from the natural man, "neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." He is ever tempted to turn away from what he feels to be the too dazzling splendor of holiness in which the Word of God shines, just as weak eyes turn away from the sun, and as the children of Israel could not look upon the face of Moses when it was resplendent with the light of God. Should he continue to gaze, he is blinded by excess of light, and the very light appears as darkness. "Eyes has he, but he sees not." ' He sees the letter, but the veil is over the heart, and he discerns not the spirit. There is a dimness, a haziness in his perception of the regenerating and spiritual truths of God's Word. He sees no beauty in its truths; he sees no beauty in its grand truth, the truth of truths; he sees no beauty in Christ that he should desire him. As the full soul loatheth the honeycomb, so the man who

is full of his own righteousness turns away from Christ, saying, "What have I to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" But when it pleaseth the Lord to open his eyes, as he opened the eyes of the blind when on earth, then he beholds wondrous things in God's holy law. Its spiritual meaning, before hid, like writing in invisible ink, starts, under this more powerful than chemical process, into legibility, and as he reads he discovers new beauties in every page. Not that there has been any change in the Word, but there is a change in the person who reads it. I had occasion lately to pass through some of the loveliest scenery in America, first in the darkness of night, and afterwards in the light of day; and what a difference! There is a like difference between the way in which the carnal man and the spiritual man perceive the truths of God's Word. The object viewed is the same, but there is a difference in the eye that looks on it. In particular, our eyes being enlightened, we get a totally new view of the person and work of the Redeemer; we discover him to be the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Now, "we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Let us try to unfold what is contained in this passage, and as we do so, may our eyes be opened to see the beauty of Christ.

## I.

WE ALL WITH OPEN FACE BEHOLDING AS IN A  
GLASS.

By *beholding* we are to understand faith, or rather faith in one of its liveliest and most important exercises. In the rich and pictured style of language adopted in the Scriptures, faith is often described by one of its most expressive acts. The outward sign is put for the inward sentiment. Faith, true, saving, spiritual faith, is a living principle. It hath ears, and it hears the Word as a message of God. It hath hands, and it lays hold of and handles Christ the Word of Life. It hath eyes, and it looks and beholds Christ. The believer looks to Christ and his wounds with the eye of the mind, just as the serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the serpent of brass raised by Moses in the wilderness. He whose eyes have been opened sees the land that is afar off as if it were near, as in certain states of our atmosphere we see the distant mountains as if they were close at hand. This beholding does not consist of a single glance, of a passing survey. He has beheld the king in his beauty, and the view which he has got so ravishes his heart that he looks anew and anew, and is learning to gaze on the glory. With open face beholding, — this is the common attitude of his soul. "Looking" is not a single act,

but the habit of his soul. "Looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith."

*With open face.* The language refers to the immediate and clear view which we obtain of the character and work of Christ in the New Testament. Under the Jewish dispensation Christ was exhibited, but it was as it were through a veil. In the infancy of the church it was instructed by the law as a school-master, after the manner in which the teacher is accustomed to instruct his younger pupils by means of vivid representations, by signs and by symbols. But just because the teaching was by means of shadows, there was a mystery attached to it. The people could not worship except through a priesthood and sacrifice. From their holy temple the light of day was excluded, and the only light was that supplied by the seven-branched golden candlestick. Into the holiest of all, representing the Divine presence, the high priest alone entered, and this only once a year, and not without blood. In the service of the synagogue, the worshippers sat with their heads veiled in deepest reverence when the law was read. But now, when Christ came, the mystery which had been hid for ages is revealed. At the hour when Jesus said, "It is finished," the veil that hid the holiest of all, and the innermost secrets of the covenant, was rent in twain from top to bottom. The church, now more highly favored, needs not the tutors and governors which it required in its earlier years. We have now as priests access at once into the immediate presence

of God through the one sacrifice that was offered. Our power of vision is so strengthened that we no longer require signs and types, but we look directly on Christ evidently crucified, and with open face behold him.

*As in a glass.* Allusion is here made not to a mirror of glass, which was known, but not much known in ancient times, but to a reflecting mirror of burnished and highly polished metal. When a person or a scene is opposite we perceive as we look into it not the object, but a correct likeness of it. Such a mirror the apostle tells us we have in the volume of the Word, for it is to it the apostle refers; and as we look into it heavenly objects are perceived, especially the glory of the Lord Christ.

We who dwell in tabernacles of clay, whose character is polluted and whose eye is dimmed by sin, cannot see God as the spirits made perfect do in heaven. "No man hath seen God at any time." His voice has been heard on more than one occasion, as at our Lord's baptism, and again at his transfiguration, when the Father pointed to him as his representative and said, "This is my beloved Son;" but no man has seen his person or beheld the full glory of God. Moses, emboldened by the many favors bestowed upon him, desired on one occasion to behold the glory of God. "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." But the request could not be granted even to this highly-favored servant of Heaven, and the reason of the refusal was given: "No man can

see God, and live." Flesh and blood would be consumed in the blaze of that light. But though the Lord did not condescend to allow Moses to behold his glory, yet he gave him a signal manifestation of his presence. "And the Lord said, Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen. . . . And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Such is the view which God condescends to give to the believer in the Word, of himself in the face of his Son, as a just God who will by no means clear the guilty, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,—a gracious and encouraging view, not indeed of his essential glory, which the sinner cannot behold, but of his glory as exhibited in his grace, and on which the eye of the believer delights to rest; not of his throne of glory in heaven before which angels veil their faces with their wings, but of his throne of grace set up on earth, and on which the sinner, conscious of his sin, never wearies to gaze, and we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord.

## II.

THE BELIEVER BEHOLDS "THE GLORY OF THE  
LORD."

By the Lord we are evidently to understand, as the whole context shows, the Lord Christ. And here observe the relation between these three things which are often confounded in our apprehensions, but which have their separate places allotted to them in this passage,—the relation between Faith, the Word, and Christ. Faith is the eye by which we behold; the Word is the mirror into which we look; the Lord is the object we see as we look into the mirror of the Word. Notice what is the proper object of faith,—it is the Lord. We look into the Word as into a mirror, not so much to fix our attention on the Word, as to fix it on the object reflected in the mirror,—on Christ the Lord. When we look into the mirror it is to behold "the glory of the Lord."

In him as thus disclosed we shall behold a glory. In his person he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." In his work all the perfections of the Divine character meet as in a focus of surpassing brilliancy. And glorious as he is in heaven, he acquires to our eyes—not only so, but in the eyes of the whole angelic host—a new glory when he becomes flesh and tabernacles on the earth. For there is a higher glory than that of awful majesty and unlimited power.

There was a glory in his incarnation, and the angel who came to announce the tidings to Mary felt that no creature since the commencement of creation had been sent on a more important embassy. There was true glory in his birth in the stable at Bethlehem,—a glory which fallen man could not appreciate, but which the company of the heavenly host observed as they sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to the children of men.” There was glory in his baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended upon him, and the voice of the Father was heard declaring, “This is my well-beloved Son.” There was glory in the battle which he fought and the victory which he won in the wilderness, on the mountain, and on the pinnacle of the temple. There was an imposing glory in the grand scene disclosed to the eyes of the three apostles on the mount of transfiguration, when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, and Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, were heard conversing with him, and there came a voice from the excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son.” There was a glory, too, in the very humiliation of the Saviour,—a glory in his sorrow, a glory in his agony, a glory in his ignominy, a glory in his shame, a glory in the cursed death which he died. Go ask the saints who dwell in glory, and who have seen the full glory of the Lord, what is the most glorious view which they take of him, and you may learn their answer from the song which they sing, unto him

who redeemed them to God by his blood. Go ask the angels who have ministered before God since creation began, in what it is that we may see the glory of God most fully reflected; and you know their reply when you hear that the voice of many angels joins with the voice of the redeemed, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and blessing." In the view of the inhabitants of heaven, the most glorious event of which our earth has been the scene, the event which they desire to look into, is the incarnation and the death of the Son of God. In earthly affairs, there may be a greater glory in suffering and sorrow than in prosperity and dazzling splendor. There may, for example, be a greater glory in the soldier's death than in his life; there was a greater glory in Samson's death than in all the achievements of his life. But speak not of the glory of the soldier bleeding in defence of a nation's rights; speak not of the glory of the patriot toiling and suffering and dying for his country's freedom; speak not of the glory of the martyr, calm and rejoicing while tied to the burning stake. These have no glory, because of the glory that excelleth,—the glory of Christ's condescension and patience and love in submitting to shame, to sorrow, and to death.

There was an evident glory in his resurrection, when, having gone down to the dark dominions of death, he came up a mighty conqueror, bearing the

fruits of victory, and holding death in chains as his prisoner; and angels believed themselves honored in announcing that "the Lord is risen." There was a glory in his ascension into heaven. "Thou hast ascended on high, leading captivity captive;" and angels were waiting at the portals of heaven to receive him as a mighty victor returned from conquest, and singing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? the Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." The angelic host feel as if, besides that essential and hereditary glory which he had in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, he had acquired an additional glory by the work in which he had been engaged and the victory he had won. He is in glory now at the right hand of God, which glory Stephen was privileged to behold when he "looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." He shall come in glory at the last day to judge the world in the midst of an assembled universe. He shall dwell in his glory through all eternity, and the saints shall be partakers with him of that glory. Now all this glory,—the glory of his majesty and the glory of his meekness, the glory of his might and the glory of his mercy, the glory of his power in heaven and of his shame on earth, the glory of his character and the glory of his sufferings, the glory of his cross and the glory of his crown,—all

these are exhibited in the volume of the Book, just as we have seen an expansive scene of sky and cloud, of hills and plains, of streams and woods, reflected and exhibited before us in a mirror, and we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord.

### III.

THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY OUR LOOKING BY FAITH  
UNTO JESUS, — WE ARE CHANGED INTO THE SAME  
IMAGE FROM GLORY TO GLORY.

This transforming power of faith arises from two sources not independent of each other, but still separable.

1. Faith is the receiving grace of the Christian character, and the soul is enriched by the treasures poured through it as a channel. You hear individuals ask in doubt or in scorn, "Oh, how should there be so great merit in faith to save the sinner!" My friends, there is no merit in faith. One reason why faith is chosen as the means of saving us is, that it has and can have no merit. "Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By the law of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Not of works, lest any man should boast." Faith is in its very nature humble and dependent; it looks to another, it leans on another. It is the mere mean or channel through which the blessings which Christ purchased flow in richest abundance into the soul. Now, it is required

of a good medium or channel that there be nothing in it to obstruct that which is meant to pass through it. Herein lies the great efficacy of faith: it receives that which is given it, and through it the virtue that is in Christ flows into the soul, enriches and satisfies it, and changes it into the same image.

2. Faith produces this effect, inasmuch as it makes us look to and copy Christ. The Spirit carries on the work of sanctification by making us look unto Jesus; and whatever we look to with admiration and love we are disposed and inclined willingly, sometimes almost involuntarily, to imitate. Now, the believer has such a model, to which he is ever looking, set before him in the character of Jesus, who hath set us an example, that we should follow his steps. If such great effects have followed from copying excellence which is but imperfect, what greater influence must ensue from looking to spotless purity! We have in the Gospels a lifelike picture of his conduct, and of the particular incidents of it, and this while he was placed in a great variety of situations, and all that we may model our character on his. We as it were see him acting and hear him speaking in a great number of interesting and instructive circumstances: we see him while with his disciples and in the family of Bethany; amidst the acclamations of the Jewish people, and amidst their execrations; as he rejoiced over the conversion of sinners, and when grieved with their hardness of heart; as he pitied his enemies and prayed for them, and wept

over the grave of a friend. In beholding Jesus by faith, our character is assimilated to his. We grow in likeness to him whom we love and admire. It is when looking with open face into the face of Jesus, that his likeness is impressed upon the soul as we have seen the image of heaven reflected on the bosom of a tranquil lake spread out beneath it. "From glory to glory." It is the highest glory of the creature to resemble the Creator, and of the believer to resemble his Saviour; and the follower of Christ growing up to him in all things which is the head, even Christ, "comes in the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

#### IV.

##### ALL THIS IS DONE BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD.

Let us notice the harmony between the work of the Spirit and the principles of man's mind. The Spirit of God in sanctifying our nature does not do any violence to it; he simply restores all its powers to their original state. He does not convert or sanctify sinners against their will, but by making them a willing people in the day of his power. What he does in us he does by us. The very circumstance that it is God who worketh in us, is a reason why we ourselves should work; for were it not that he worketh in us, the work would be helpless. "Where-

fore he saith, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is when we are beholding the glory of the Lord Christ, that the Spirit changes us into the same image from glory to glory.

Let us observe the harmony between the work of Christ the Lord and the work of the Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ proceeding from the Father and the Son, and he takes of the things that are Christ's and shows them unto us. The Spirit directs our eyes to Christ, and it is when we look to the Lord Christ that we are changed into the same image. Christ sends his Spirit to the sinner, and the sinner instantly looks to Christ. It is by the Spirit that the believer is sanctified; but the Spirit carries on his work by means of that faith which keeps the eye fixed on Jesus. Do you wish to find your way to the Saviour, apply to the Spirit to guide you. Do you wish to have more of the gift of the Spirit, then look to him who among other gifts has purchased the gift of the Spirit. Thus closely are the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit connected.

We thus see that it is the Spirit that quickens and is the source of all spiritual life. It is the Spirit who first opens the eyes of the sinner to give him a saving view of the glory of Christ. It is the Spirit of the Lord, and not our own spirit, which is earthly and sensual, that keeps our eyes fixed on the Lord.

It is through the power of the Spirit of the Lord that our character is renewed after the image of him to whom we look. He must begin the work if ever it is begun; and he who begins the good work must perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ. There is no room at any one part of the plan of salvation, for human merit. "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded." It can find an entrance at no one point. Not certainly in the original plan, for the purpose was of God. Not in the execution of it, for it has been wrought out and finished by Christ. Not in the application of it, for the calling is of God. Not in the conducting of the work of grace in the heart, for it is by the Spirit of the Lord. Its foundation is laid in grace, in everlasting grace, and he who hath laid the foundation brings forth "the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

This passage has opened to us some interesting views of Faith, of its nature, its object, its power, its author. As to its nature, we have seen that in it the mind and heart are fixed on Christ. As to its object, it is God in Christ; it is Christ the Lord. As to its power, it has a transforming effect on the character. As to its author, the power from which it derives its power, it is the Spirit of the Lord.

We see the advancement in Christ's kingdom. Under the Old Testament they saw everything in shadow, the shadow going before. Under the New Testament they see the figure fully defined in a

mirror. But in heaven they shall see face to face and eye to eye. Thus do we advance from glory to glory.

We see what constitutes the church: it is the body of Christ. We see what constitutes a Christian: it is being united to Christ by faith. We see wherein lies the unity of the church; it is in the common faith and the common love of Christians. The robe with which he clothes his beloved children is indeed party-colored, like that with which Jacob clothed his son Joseph; but it is made of that which Jesus wore, and is without seam and cannot be divided.

## THE OFFICES OF THE SPIRIT.

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth. — JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

**O**UR Lord had told his disciples that he was forthwith to leave them. Because of this, sorrow filled their hearts, which was met by a corresponding sorrow on the part of Jesus. It has often been remarked that the love of friends never seems so great as when they are about to separate ; and it certainly looks as if the prospect of parting with the disciples who had companied with him for years imparted a special tenderness to these heart utterances of our Lord. The Sun of Righteousness looks larger and shines upon us with a greater splendor as he sets. It was as he was about to leave them that he gave the promise of the Comforter, or rather, as it is in the original, of the Paraclete, the defender of his people as his clients.

The Scriptures everywhere proclaim the essential unity of God. But they speak also of a multiplicity, and it is felt and acknowledged that there is a beauty in multiplicity when combined in unity. The Father is represented as God, the Son as God, and

the Holy Spirit as God, and yet these three are one. There is no contradiction here. Saint Patrick illustrated this to our forefathers by pointing to the three-leaved clover, of which we may say that each leaf is the clover-leaf, while the threefold leaf is one. We are thus enabled to understand that God who is love should have dwelt forever, not in loneliness, but in fellowship,—the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost towards each other throughout eternity. As they are one in their love towards each other, so they are one in their love to us. The Spirit proceedeth from the Father (John xv. 26). The Son prays the Father to send the Spirit (xiv. 16). The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us (xvi. 14). We are now to consider the offices of the Spirit in dealing with the sinner.

### I.

*The Spirit convinces the sinner of sin.* Our Lord promised "When he is come he will reprove the world of sin" (John xvi. 8). This is commonly the first operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul. There are cases indeed in which the soul seems to be drawn at once to Christ by a perception of his beauty, without any fears or compunctions. But as a general rule the soul is first roused from its apathy and then takes refuge in Christ. They who feel that they are whole, will not be likely to send for a physician. The diseased man may require to

be told that he is sick in order to induce him to look round for a remedy. So Christ by his Spirit begins his work by charging the sinner with his guilt, by reproofing him because of sin, by convicting him of breaking God's law.

This work is symbolized in a variety of ways. In Scripture, the evening cometh before the morning, and the evening and the morning make the day. In the opening of his ministry, Jesus entered the temple, which he found full of unseemly trafficking, and he threw down the tables, and he made a scourge of small cords and drove out the money-changers; so he visits our hearts, which ought to be his temple, but are full of selfishness and corruption, as "a refiner and purifier." It is the ploughing and harrowing to prepare the soil for casting the seed into it. It is the thunder-storm which clears and purifies the atmosphere. We have a picture of it in the mighty rushing wind which filled the house where the disciples were assembled, the immediate precursor of the full descent of the Spirit. It is like the cloven tongues of fire which sat on each of them, and their hearts and mouths were opened to pour forth burning words. It is the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire heard by the prophet, coming before the still small voice that speaketh peace.

It is no unfavorable sign when the sinner is moved and agitated as to the state of his soul before God. He should rather hail it as the sailor hails the breeze rising in the midst of torpor to drive on his vessel.

When you see one lying prostrate on the ground, struck by some terrible blow, and you do not know whether he is or is not alive, what is the first favorable symptom? As long as he lies there motionless and unruffled, every bystander is alarmed, every relative is in sorrow. That sleep is too like the sleep of death to give relief to anxious friends. But let there be seen a struggle to rise, let there be a flood of tears, let there be a cry of agony which in other circumstances would cause us to tremble, and relief is instantly felt; these agitations allay the agitations of friends; these tears make their tears to cease to flow, and the wild cry is answered by exclamations of joy. So it is with this man unconcerned about salvation: fools may congratulate him; but the wise and good will be anxious till they learn that he is becoming dissatisfied with himself, till they see the writhings of conviction, and hear the cry, "What must I do to be saved?"

This conviction of sin consists essentially, as Mr. McCheyne expressed it, in a man being made to feel the "dreadfulness of his natural condition." Man is a sinner, but may not know it, may not feel it; but the Spirit of Truth now makes him to realize it. He sees himself as he is, and as God sees him; and as he does so he "abhors himself," and longs to be changed. It is not as yet faith; but as the man feels his insecurity he is driven to faith,—that is, trust in one who can save him. It is not yet repentance unto life; but it is bursting open the fountain

that penitence may flow out. It is the bursting of the tomb that the soul may rise.

But let not any one linger in this state and thus resist the Spirit. This is as dangerous as it would have been to Lot to remain after the command had been given him to depart. "Remember Lot's wife." He who looks back loses his opportunity, and in the judgments of God against disobedience will sink into a state of apathy, stiff and cold as the pillar of salt. Alas! many seem to continue for years in this unsafe and uncomfortable state. They seem to be out of the land of bondage, to be journeying on to the land of promise, and yet by a strange infatuation they never reach it; but they wander all their lives in an intermediate wilderness, sometimes on the one hand longing for the pleasures, for the flesh-pots of their former state, and sometimes on the other sending out stray messengers to spy the land of milk and honey that lies before them, but yet dying after all when they have obtained only a distant view of it, having seen enough to make them wish for the rest and security which it affords, but enough also to make them regret that so much has been lost by them.

Another, the final and decisive step, needs to be taken.

## II.

*The Spirit converts the soul.* This is a farther and a much more important step; indeed, it is the essential

one towards which all the preliminary ones look, and from which all the others proceed. It is proverbial that conviction may not become conversion. The blossoms of spring are pleasant to look upon and full of promise, but they do not all form into fruit; how often are the convictions nipped by the cold frosts of the heart and driven away by the wind of temptation!

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." You put the question, "How can these things be?" In many respects conversion is a very mysterious work, as every work of God is. But it becomes a mystery in the sense in which the word is used in Scripture,—that is, in the sense that what is dark in itself is revealed. The converted man from his own experience can say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." It is often thought that there is a greater mystery in conversion than there really is. After all, it is simple enough. It is not inconsistent with our original and deeper nature, which it calls into exercise from beneath the incrustations of sin under which it has been lying. It is a new object presented, or rather an object presented in a new light,—it is Christ presented as altogether lovely. This object is apprehended and believed in. The sinner accepts of him as his Saviour. In the very act there is a change, and this act is conversion. Hitherto, under the influence of divers lusts and

pleasures, he has been walking on the broad path that goes down towards destruction; now his face is turned the other way, looking towards that lovely and loving Saviour who has attracted him, and he walks in the narrow way that leadeth to life.

Conversion does not consist in imparting new faculties to the soul. The new man is still the old man in his essential nature; but he is a changed man. In particular he takes a new view of every object. He takes a new view of himself. Before, he may have regarded himself with complacency, only confessing occasional failures; now, he sees that his heart is corrupted, and ever tempting him to evil. He takes a new view of God. Before, he was alienated from him, and did not care for intercourse with him; now, he is reconciled to God in Christ, and delights to draw nigh to him and bask in the beams of his love. He takes a new view of the world. He lived for it, and sought as many of its pleasures and honors as possible; now he sees that these cannot satisfy the immortal soul, and he is seeking for enjoyments higher and more enduring. Before, he looked upon his fellow men and women as pleasant neighbors and companions, or simply as having business relations with him; now, he regards them as having, like himself, immortal souls, and he must not only be kind and obliging to them, but he must seek to do them spiritual good. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh."

I have been in the way of dividing the powers of

the mind into the cognitive, or knowing, on the one hand, and the motive, which stir up desire and lead to action, on the other. Now, the change wrought by conversion is chiefly in the motive powers, that is, in the motives by which men are swayed in what is called in Scripture, the heart. Hitherto, the man has been influenced by such appetences as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Now, he is led by higher affections, — by the love of God, the love of man, and a desire to do good. These and like motives lead to virtuous conduct.

The immoral man may be converted; but it is implied in such cases that his vices are immediately abandoned. In cases in which religious exercises have been neglected, they will now be attended to. In cases in which error has been entertained in the past, there will now be an earnest desire to know the truth. Whatever he may have been or done, he now takes the law of God as his rule, and would do all that is required in it, and avoid all that is inconsistent with it. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The converted man may or may not know that he is converted. He may or he may not know the precise time of his conversion, which however always takes place at a particular moment. The sun rises at a given instant, but he may be encompassed with clouds, and for a time we may not know whether he has risen or not. But we see streaks of light in the sky, and the darkness is being dispelled. So it is with the soul of the converted; it may be oppressed

for a time with doubts and fears, but it cherishes a good hope through grace, and it walks on towards the light and at last rejoices in its beams.

### III.

*The Spirit sanctifies the believer.* Our Lord prays, "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth." Men of science have at length discovered what is the character of the world so far as it consists of animated beings. "It is a struggle for existence;" it is "the survival of the fittest." So it is with the Christian life. The old man conquered, but not thoroughly subdued, contends with the new life which has been superinduced.

So the Christian life is a work, it is a warfare. It is a campaign in a country with the people conquered, but still fighting. It is a voyage towards a haven through winds and waves. It consists in the conquest of sin in a sinful nature, in the attainment of holiness in an unholy heart. It is like life in an infected city; it is sustained in the midst of deleterious and deadly influences. The sinner yet in his sins is not engaged in the battle, and so is not aware of the strength of the enemy. Those going down with the stream do not know its power; those only who are bearing up against it are conscious of the strength of the current. The children of Israel sat contentedly by the flesh-pots of Egypt so long as they submitted to their slavery; it was only when

they were seized with a spirit of independence, that they felt how difficult their tasks and how hard their task-masters. It is when the captive would break his chains that the iron enters into his soul.

So the Christian life is everywhere described as a contest. The seed of the woman strives with the seed of the serpent (Gen. iii. 15). There is a constant reference to a warfare between the evil and the good throughout the Book of Psalms. The fight is spoken of by Paul: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. v. 17). We have a minute description in Romans vii. 21-23: "I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." All Christian experience testifies to the same effect. Look to the Confessions of Augustine, to the letters and lives of the Reformers, to the diaries of later Christians, and we find them all uttering the same sentiments in different tongues; mourning over a remainder of sin with which they are earnestly contending, and which they hope finally to conquer. Paul had to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In this language, reference is made to a barbarous custom among the Romans. They chained the prisoner to a soldier, and it might be

that when the soldier died, the prisoner felt himself tied to a dead body. Virgil paints in all its horrors the practice of the tyrant Megentius, who bound the living to the dead, hand to hand and mouth to mouth. In allusion to this practice, Paul felt as if he, a living man, were joined to a corpse, and had to cry out, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

It is a contest between the lower principles of man's nature and the higher, quickened and sanctified by the Spirit of God. It is a struggle between the animal man and the spiritual man; between pleasure and duty; between selfishness and benevolence; between appetite and conscience; between lust and reason; between love of ease and zeal for good; between cowardice and courage; between deceit and candor; between selfishness and love; between the fear of man and the fear of God; between earth and heaven.

But they that be with us are far stronger than they that can be against us. The believer is not perfect in this world, but he is going on towards perfection in obedience to the command, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "He who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The believer is made perfect at death, when he joins "the spirits of just men made perfect."

## IV.

*The Spirit comforts the believer.* In the discourse in which our Lord promises the Spirit, he promises peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." In the very first exercise of faith we have peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peace is opposed to war. Now, there are two kinds of war among the nations of the earth. There may be war with a foreign foe, and there may be war between contending parties in the nation itself. There is a like double warfare in the soul: God is angry with the sinner on the one hand, and the soul is at enmity with God on the other. Then there are divers lusts and pleasures which war against each other and against the soul. There is thus a war without in the opposition to God and to his law, and a war within,—a civil strife,—in the opposition of one lust to another, and of the whole to what is good.

Now, there is a provision made in the gospel to remove the warfare in both these senses. God has sent his Son into the world to draw us unto himself, and his Spirit opens our eyes to see the beauty of Christ, and we accept the proffered mercy, and now God is pacified towards us and we have peace with God. We can say, "It is God that justifieth, who

is he that condemneth?" The God who has pardoned our sins, will not allow our hearts to continue in a state of rebellion and corruption; and he says to the troubled waves, "Peace, be still," and there is a calm. To be spiritually minded is life and peace. There is now a well-founded well-established peace of which we can never be deprived, and which keeps us stable amid all the vicissitudes and agitations of the world.

And this is not all. There may not only be peace, there may be joy. There may be the joy of the espousals of the soul to Christ. "Though thou wert angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Joy proceeds from the satisfaction of the soul with what it possesses, very often from its obtaining the object for which it had been striving. The shepherd had joy when he found his lost sheep; the woman who had lost a piece of money had joy when she found it; the father had joy when he embraced his lost son in his arms. So the Christian has joy when he finds Christ, and finds that he satisfies all the wants of the soul. This joy will continue as long as he keeps hold of Christ, for he feels that he is secure, whatever may befall him. This joy may rise till it becomes "unspeakable and full of glory." It is so at times on earth, it always is so in heaven. At God's right hand is fullness of joy forever more. In comparison with it all earthly enjoyments are as feeble as the light of the stars when compared with that of the sun. This

joy is kept up and sustained by Him who takes of the things that are Christ's and shows them unto us.

Let us beware of resisting the Spirit (Acts vii. 51) and by this grieving the Spirit (Eph. iv. 30), and thus quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. v. 19). Let us surrender at once when he is seeking to humble in order to exalt us. Let us yield to him when he would lead us across the line that separates the unsaved from the saved. Let us not be satisfied till every sin which pollutes the soul is washed away. Let us accept and prize the joy offered, and we shall find "the joy of the Lord to be our strength." We need to rebuke our evil heart of unbelief. We live beneath not only our bounden duties, we live beneath our promised privileges. We are satisfied with lesser, when we might have larger measures of grace. God does not say anywhere in his Word that we may have the lower but not the higher blessings. God gives grace, and to those who ask it, more grace. If our desires and expectations were larger, our supplies would be more abundant. Ye have not, because ye ask not. "Be it according to your faith." God gives not according to your merits, but according to your wants. He gives not according to your merits, but according to the merits of Christ, and these are infinite. "Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times," said the prophet Elisha to Joash, King of Israel, when he put the arrow of the Lord's deliverance into his hand and bade him shoot,

and "he smote only thrice and stayed;" and the victory was not what it might otherwise have been. So I say to you, You should have asked vastly more, and more would have been given you. Oh, that we, the beggars and suppliants, had but a little of that earnestness which Christ the benefactor has in pressing the gifts upon us. Your supply from that running fountain will be in proportion to the size of the vessel you take with you, to the extent of the desires you cherish. "Ask and receive, that your joy may be full."

## CHRISTIAN HUMILITY ILLUSTRATED IN THE CHARACTER OF PAUL.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints. — EPH. iii. 8.

**P**AUL is acknowledged on all hands to have been one of the greatest of all saints. Born in no mean city, he had a right to the important privileges of a Roman citizen; of the pure stock of Benjamin, he could boast a lineage from an older and nobler ancestry than the Roman patrician; trained to a useful trade, he was in some measure independent of the ordinary accidents of life; bred at the feet of Gamaliel, he was conversant with the history, the doctrines, and traditions of the most remarkable people that ever lived; acquainted with the speculations of the most intellectual people of the ancient world, with those of the Stoics and Epicureans and the philosophers of Greece; endowed with noble faculties, he could master his knowledge; and with a natural sincerity, eagerness, and courage, he feared not the face of man, — these were the natural talents and acquirements which he was enabled to bring and lay at the feet of Jesus, a gift nobler far than the gold, the frankincense, and myrrh brought by the wise men from the riches of the East; and he received

from Christ gifts in comparison with which he reckoned these as nothing and vanity, — forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, enlightened faith, indefatigable zeal, deep humility, and fervent love which filled his soul till it flowed out in labors which made him not a whit behind the chief of the apostles.

I.

*The Apostle remembered his past sin.* Wherever there is a quickened conscience, it will prompt the possessor to think of his past sins, and this even when he has reason to believe that they have been forgiven. The apostle continued to remember the natural and deeply-seated pride and self-righteousness which he had so long cherished. Allusion is made in every one of his public apologies and in a number of his epistles to the circumstance of his once having been an enemy of the cross of Christ and a persecutor. In a letter to Timothy, written thirty years after his conversion, he speaks of his acts of enmity against the cause of God as if they had been committed the day before, so fresh are they in his memory. "I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious."

Let us try ourselves by this test. When our minds wander back among the scenes and incidents of our past life, what are the recollections which we seek

to bring up and delight to cherish? Do we think of our ingratitude for favors conferred by God on our selfishness and ungodliness, or do we rather call up our imagined virtues, our supposed achievements? Do we fondly dwell on the compliments which have been paid us, and the honors which have been heaped upon us, and all to enable us to feed our self-esteem and to raise a hymn of praise to our own virtues? If such be our spirit and habit, it is all too certain that we have not acquired the temper to which Paul was brought when his pride was cast down on the road to Damascus, and which he ever afterwards entertained.

It is for the benefit of the believer to remember his past sinfulness. The recollection of his infirmities may enable him to guard against their recurrence. Our sins, even when past and forgiven, are apt to leave a prejudicial influence behind. The habits that have been formed will be apt to impel us in our old ways. Passions and lusts which have been fondled will seek to regain their former ascendancy. Even when these effects do not follow, there is the scandal of the offence in the eyes of man. Our sins are like wounds, which even when cured and closed are apt to leave a scar behind. It is most meet and becoming, and in every respect for his own profit and the advantage of the church and world, that the sinner, and more particularly the man whose sin has been known, should walk humbly before God and his fellow-men all the days of his life.

Nor let it be forgotten that the remembrance of past sin is one of the motives impelling the Christian to be "zealously affected in every good thing." "Simon," said our Lord to a Pharisee, "I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." Now the principle which our Lord thus drew from the mouth of the unconverted Pharisee was one on which Paul had acted since his conversion. He loved much, since much had been forgiven him. The remembrance of the injury he had done to the church stimulated him to make greater endeavors to benefit it. The persecution which he had inflicted on others made him more steadfast in bearing the sufferings to which he was now exposed. According to the account handed down from the early church, the apostle had to suffer a violent death in the reign of Nero, when Christians were covered with pitch and burned as torches, or clothed with the skins of wild beasts, and dogs let loose upon them. We can conceive that as he saw the terrible preparations for putting him to death, his memory would go back thirty years, and he would remember how he himself had stood by and consented to the death of the

holy martyr Stephen, and he would feel himself thereby the more strengthened to endure what the Lord was now pleased to lay upon him.

II.

*The Apostle mourned over the sin yet cleaving to him.* He had not only a recollection of past sin, he had a sense of present sin. "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The discovery of remaining sin is a mark of the true believer. The statement may sound paradoxical, but nevertheless it is true that the believer grieves far more over his lesser infirmities than others do over their greater. Nor is it difficult to account for this. The Spirit of God in renewing the soul has quickened the conscience, which more clearly discerns the remaining evil in the heart and conduct, and is more disposed to tremble at God's word. Thus sin is far more frequently observed, and is immeasurably more abhorred by one who is striving after holiness than by the man who is allowing himself in iniquity. The hatred of sin and the power of discerning sin increase with the Christian's spiritual excellence; and thus it is that in growing in other graces he grows also in the grace of humility, re-

sembling the tree, which in proportion as it shoots out branches and leaves towards heaven, sends down deeper roots into the soil to keep it stable in the midst of the storms that beat upon it. While the man of the world is commonly disposed to justify and commend himself, the genuine disciple is prepared to acknowledge that he is less than the least of all saints.

This sense of indwelling sin is one of the elements that conduce to the onward progress of the believer. Why is it that so many professing Christians, ay, and too many true Christians, are not advancing in the spiritual life, — are the same this week as they were the previous week; the same this year as they were the last year; and to all appearance, and unless God arouse them, will be the same next week or next year as they are this? It is because they are contented with themselves and with their condition; they have reached a state of self-complacency, they have “settled upon their lees,” and they do not wish to be disturbed by so much as an allusion to their sin. Very different was the temper of the Apostle. Conscious of the sin that still adhered to him, he longed to have it completely exterminated, and sought the heavenly aid which might enable him to reach that after which he was always striving, — “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

## III.

*The Apostle acknowledged God to be the author of all the gifts and graces possessed by him.* Paul on more than one occasion found it necessary to speak of his gifts. He felt himself called to do so in a special manner in writing the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. There were individuals in that church who had disparaged the office of the Apostle; and he found it proper in these circumstances to vindicate the powers which had been committed to him. But in doing so he feels as if he were going out of his usual way, and as if he had to proffer an excuse. "Would," says he, "ye could bear with me a little in my folly" (2 Cor. xi. 1). And when he follows this train of reflection, he arrests himself to explain that his faults are his own, and to ascribe the glory of his gifts to God: "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my infirmities." "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

There may be circumstances requiring us to speak of our attainments in the spiritual life; but there can be no excuse for our thinking of them or alluding to them in a spirit of complacency. Of all pride, spiritual pride is the most hateful, and the most lamentably inconsistent. It is absurd enough to be proud of the rank or wealth or abilities which God has given; but it is still more foolish and sinful to boast of spiritual gifts, which God bestowed at

first, and which would instantly vanish if God did not sustain them. As pride rises, the grace of God departs. The two cannot dwell in one heart any more than Dagon, the god of the Philistines, and the ark of the covenant could have a place in one temple. When we have become proud of them, the graces have already vanished. The graces are no longer graces when they are boasted of. They are so delicate in their nature, that if we but look upon them with an eye of vanity they instantly disappear.

How often does it happen that when persons are suddenly elevated to places of honor, they see nothing but their own merits, their own talent, their own skill or good management. Elevation of rank thus leads in too many cases to an increase of pride and vanity. This is painfully illustrated in the history of Saul the son of Kish. Setting out in search of his father's asses, he received before he returned a kingdom, for the discharge of the offices of which he had many qualifications. But his rise seems to have fostered the morbid vanity of his mind, and when this was not fed by constant incense, when the Israelites cried, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands," it led to envy and revenge, which goaded him on to deeds of utter infatuation. How different with Saul of Tarsus! At every step of his elevation in the church he saw the finger of God, and was the more impressed with his own unworthiness. He recognized in every talent possessed by him the gift of God. Does he

speak of his apostleship? He explains, "I am called thereto by the grace of God." Of his labors? "Not I, but the grace of God in me." Of his perseverance? "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." Of his success? "God giveth the increase." Of his general character? "By the grace of God I am what I am."

## IV.

*The Apostle took a high standard of excellence.* He took as his model the law of God and the character of Jesus.

Others take a lower standard, and hence their inferiority. They are contented with themselves when they give to God the mere outward obeisance of the body, or because they pay a general respect to one of the tables of the law to the neglect of the other. Or they are satisfied with themselves because they are as reputable as other professing Christians, or as this particular individual who stands high in the church or in the world. "They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." Having taken some low standard, and having reached it, they regard themselves with the most perfect satisfaction. Some seem to be positively afraid lest they should appear to be more concerned about the salvation of their souls or more devoted to Christ, than their neighbors. Oh, how sad to think that believers, when they look to one another, should do so with the view of discover-

ing something which may allow them to continue in their present low state of attainment, and that they should join hand in hand, not to raise each other, but rather, like drowning men, to drag each other down to a still lower level!

All actual excellence, whether earthly or spiritual, has been attained by the mind keeping before it and dwelling upon the ideas of the great, the good, the beautiful, the grand, the perfect. The tradesman and mechanic reach the highest eminence by never allowing themselves to rest till they can produce the most finished specimens of their particular craft. The painter and sculptor travel to distant lands that they may see and as it were fill their eye and mind with the sight of the most beautiful models of their arts. Poets have had their yet undiscovered genius awakened into life as they contemplated some of the grandest of Nature's scenes; or as they listened to the strains of other poets the spirit of inspiration has descended upon them, as the spirit of inspiration descended on Elijah while the minstrel played before him. The soldier's spirit has been aroused even more by the stirring sound of the war-trumpet than by the record of the courage and heroism of other warriors. The fervor of one patriot has been created as he listened to the burning words of another patriot; and many a martyr's zeal has been kindled at the funeral pile of other martyrs. In this way fathers have handed down their virtues to their children, and those who could leave their offspring

no other, have in their example left them the very richest legacy; and the deeds of those who perform great achievements have lived far longer than those who do them, and have gone down from one generation to another.

Now the believer has such a model set before him in the law of the Lord which is "perfect," which is "holy, just, and good;" and lest he should complain that the law is rather fitted to dazzle him by its excessive brightness, he has such a model set before him in the character of Jesus, which as it were embodies the law and exhibits it in the most attractive and encouraging light. "Be ye followers of me," says Paul; but adds this most important qualification, "even as I am of Christ." We may copy others in some things: we should copy Christ in all. It is pleasant to see the path in which we walk trodden by the footsteps of the flock; but we are to follow the flock only so far as they follow the shepherd. It is when the believer is looking to Jesus, that by grace he becomes assimilated to him. It is when looking full into the face of Jesus, that his likeness is impressed upon the soul, as we have seen the image of heaven reflected on the bosom of a tranquil lake spread out beneath it. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Learn (1) *The nature of true humility.* We are not to understand by it that bashfulness, so becoming

in youth, which blushes at the recital of its own praise, and wins our confidence and love, when a bolder and more presuming address could not command them. We are not even to understand by it that modesty which shrinks from the very appearance of what is unseemly, and would rather be deprived of its rights than give occasion of offence, or disturb the peace of any. These are lovely natural graces which may adorn other and higher principles, as leaves do the fruit, or may conceal the absence of them. But they do not severally or together amount to the spiritual grace of humility. Underneath the bashful look and the modest demeanor there may be the intensest carnal enmity to God. True humility is a Christian grace, and one of the fruits of the Spirit, originating in a deep consciousness of sin, past and present, and leading us to discover our nothingness in the view of God, our insufficiency for anything that is good, and prompting us, as we feel our infirmities, to strive after higher and yet higher attainments.

Learn (2) *The advantages of humility.* How much nobler and more exalting than pride, though pride is often recommended by the men of the world as the grand means of prompting to great and noble deeds! Pride looks down on that which is beneath, and being contented, reckons all further exertion unnecessary. Humility, on the other hand, looks up to that which is above, and discovering how far it falls beneath, it strives to reach up to it. Pride looks

back upon past deeds, and calculating with nicety what it has done, it commits itself to rest; whereas humility looks to that which is before and in advance, and discovering how much ground remains to be trodden, it is active and vigilant, ever marching on. Where pride stops, humility proceeds. Having gained one height, pride looks down thence with complacency on that which is beneath it; whereas humility looks up to a higher and yet higher elevation. The one keeps us on this earth, which is congenial to its nature; the other directs our eye to heaven, and tends to lift us up thither.

"I am less than the least of all saints." Is Paul less in heaven because when on earth he felt after this manner? No; the man less than the least of all saints is now the companion of angels. The pearl that glitters on the robe of princes was formed in the bottom of the ocean; and the soul that shines as a star in heaven is formed in the depths of lowliness and contrition. The diamond that shines in the crown of kings was found by the skilful eye in the dust of the earth, and was trampled under foot by the ignorant; and the jewels that will adorn the crown of our Redeemer in the day when he maketh up his jewels, are found among the despised, the lowly, the penitent on the earth. The eye that now gazes on the splendors of heaven would scarcely when on earth lift itself up to the place where God dwelleth. So true is it that "humility cometh before honor," and that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

## THE SIFTING OF PETER.

Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. — LUKE xxii. 31, 32.

THE night on which our Lord thus warned his beloved, his loving, and yet erring disciple, is one much to be remembered by the disciples of Christ throughout their generations. On it the Lord's supper was instituted; on it Jesus was in agony in the garden of Gethsemane; and on it he was betrayed and led to judgment. These circumstances impart an additional emphasis to the words of admonition and tenderness which proceeded from his lips. He is here represented as seated at the table with his disciples. He has the prospect before him of a conflict from which the highest archangel would have shrunk, and to which he himself, travelling in the greatness of his strength, never alluded except in language of awe. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." But even in view of the tremendous scenes before him, he did not forget the poor fishermen and mechanics whom he had chosen as his

disciples. He knew that the trials which he could surmount were too great for them, and we find him in this passage warning all his disciples, and more particularly the one who was most apt to fall, because he felt as if he stood most securely. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

## I.

## THE CHARACTER OF PETER.

While all men are alike in the leading features of their characters, giving evidence that they are of one blood, they yet differ from one another in many not unimportant points. The character of Peter is a very marked one. The most careless reader of Scripture fully comprehends it, it is so vividly delineated in the sacred narrative, chiefly through his being placed in a variety of trying situations, where his ruling sentiments are called forth into action. His character stands out in bold prominence and relief, like an object situated on a height, and seen between us and a clear sky. We notice at once his natural sincerity and boldness, his vehemence and self-confidence; his liability to be hurried away by the tide of events and the current of prevailing feeling. We perceive that as a disciple of

Christ he is under the guardian care and grace of Heaven; but we discover sin lurking within, and bursting forth from time to time as the liquid fire of the volcano breaks out from the mountain whose surface may be covered with the loveliest foliage. His love to Jesus was genuine and sincere, — for with all his failings Peter was no hypocrite; yet he not infrequently resists the will of his Master, and at times is positively ashamed of him. He is zealously affected in every good thing, but his zeal is often unthinking and impetuous, and proceeds from a self-confident and self-righteous rather than a humble and trustful spirit of dependence on God; and it comes forth when it should be restrained, and fails when it should flow. These characteristics of Peter are brought out prominently by the incidents recorded of him by the evangelists. When Christ put the searching question to his disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter, ever eager, was ready with his answer, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." How strange to find the same disciple immediately after, when Jesus showed him that he must needs go up to Jerusalem, and there suffer many things, and be put to death, proceeding to rebuke his master: "Far be this from thee, Lord." When the multitude forsook our Lord on one occasion, on his explaining to them the spiritual nature of his kingdom, he turned round to his disciples and said, "Will ye also go away?" Peter's love is only fanned into a flame by this opposing

wind, and the answer comes from the depths of his heart, "To whom can we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." When our Lord warned him, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," Peter answered, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death;" and he did exhibit a mistaken zeal and courage in cutting off the high priest's servant's ear; yet the same apostle quailed before the question of a servant-maid, and with cursing and swearing declared that he knew not the man. The boldest of all the apostles in preaching on the day of Pentecost to the assembled thousands, and the most zealous in publishing the gospel among his countrymen, he was yet tempted on one occasion to dissemble and yield to their narrow Jewish prejudices, and Paul had to withstand him to the face. Such is the individual to whom our Lord in this passage gives the solemn warning which we now proceed to consider.

## II.

## TEMPTATION OF PETER BY SATAN.

"Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." We see that we are to regard our temptations as coming from Satan the tempter, the accuser. He who rebelled against God in heaven seeks to thwart his will on earth. With a cherished and deeply-seated hatred to the truth and all godli-

ness, he is bent on destroying the divine image wherever it appears, and proceeds to pollute what is pure and to stain what is lovely. In the restlessness of pride seeking dominion, of malice ever raging, and revenge never gratified, he goeth about like a wild beast ravening for its prey; as the apostle expresses it, "like a lion seeking whom he may devour." Having succeeded in polluting our race at its fountain, he would prevent it from being ever purified. He had the presumption in the wilderness, on the mountain, and on the pinnacle of the temple, to endeavor to turn aside our Lord from his great mission; but being defeated by the Master he now assails the disciples. About the very time when Jesus was warning Peter, he took full possession of Judas Iscariot, — "The Devil entered into Judas Iscariot," whom he hurried from one crime to another till he laid violent hands on himself. May he not succeed also with his brother apostle? If he has succeeded in making the one betray his Master, may he not be able to make the other deny and forsake him? May he not work on his eagerness, his impetuosity, his self-confidence, till he makes him bring reproach upon the cause of his Lord? Were he to accomplish this, he feels as if his triumph would be complete. Little did Peter think, little does the believer think, what stratagems are laid against him, devised by fallen angels in the deepest councils of the lowest hell. We may all of us have experienced that in these temptations which assail us and before which we fall

there is such a seductiveness, such an adaptation and address to our weaknesses, such a combination of circumstances, as to show that there has been a deep plotting and a conspiracy against us.

In tempting us Satan takes advantage of two circumstances. He employs the world to seduce us, and he addresses the corruption of the heart. First, he takes advantage of the circumstances in which we are placed, and of the worldly and sinful character of those with whom we mingle. Breathing as we do an infected atmosphere, we are apt to take in malaria which breeds moral disease. We can put ourselves into the position of Peter on that eventful and trying evening. Let us follow him for a little. While seated at the supper his mind is agitated by alternate joy and sorrow, hope and fear. He is happy in the presence of the Saviour, but his heart is filled with sorrow when he is told of his being about to be speedily taken from his disciples. He clings to the idea that Christ is to conquer and accomplish a good end, and yet sees clearly that there is danger at hand threatening a defeat. Under such distracted feelings he follows Jesus late at night into the garden of Gethsemane. His body is exhausted, not so much by fatigue as by the crowded feelings in his bosom; and though the spirit is willing, "yet the flesh is weak;" and the events which he has to witness—the bloody sweat, the exceeding sorrow even unto death, the agony, and the prayer, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—awe and confound him; and, not knowing what

to make of them, he casts himself on the ground and is soon sleeping for sorrow. He is roused by the approach of a company of officers, with one of his fellow-disciples guiding them. In the eagerness of his zeal he starts up to defend his Master and wounds one of the servants of the high priest, but is rebuked by his Master for the spirit which he shows. Conceive now the position of this disciple in these bewildering scenes. Is not the cause with which he has identified himself failing, or rather fallen? Judas, who was the treasurer of the little company, has set him an awful example. The pharisees, the rulers, the priests, the heads of the government, the successors of Aaron, those who sit in Moses' seat, are bent on condemning the new teacher as a deceiver; and the people who long stood by him are now prepared to abandon him, perceiving the nature of the kingdom he was about to set up, so different from what they expected. What can a poor fisherman far away from his Galilean home do in the midst of this formidable opposition? He looks round to the other disciples and he sees them fleeing, and under the impulse of the moment he follows them. After having gone so far as to be out of danger he pauses, and prompted by eager curiosity and a return of love to his Lord he resolves to follow him, but follows at a distance. He ventures into the court of the high priest, he sees his Master guarded by a company of well-trained Roman soldiers, he hears the scoffs and the jeers of the dependents of the men of authority, he hears threatenings and

slaughter breathed out all around. He is tempted to flee anew from the scene, but anxious "to know the end," "he followed afar off," trusting that he is not noticed, when suddenly the question is put to him, "Art thou also one of this man's disciples?"

We can conceive how trying the circumstances. A being perfectly holy might have stood all this; but Peter was not spotlessly pure. Alas! his faith was weak and inward corruption was strong. There was not only the Devil and the world without, there was the flesh within. Besides the open enemy, there was a traitor within the camp. The robbers outside had an accomplice in the house. His views of Divine truth were as yet very imperfect, and his faith was weak and wavering, and had to contend with personal fears. With the wheat there was the chaff, and Satan seized the moment to sift him. We see how all things without and within combined, under the arch conspirator, to tempt this disciple; and when the question was put so suddenly, "Art thou one of this man's disciples?" his courage shook, his faith faltered. "I know him not; I know not, neither understand, what thou sayest." Being charged a second time, he felt that he could not give in without humiliation, and with an oath he asseverated that he knew not the man. Once more they that stood by identified him and charged him with being a follower of Jesus. To confess now would be acknowledging a previous falsehood. His pride and passion became exasperated to the highest degree by the very resistance offered to the truth,

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and he went on to add profanity to lying; "and he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak."

How humiliating the position in which the disciple is now placed! How humiliating in his own eyes when he began to look at it! "I know not the man." What! know not the man who had called him to the discipleship, the man with whom he had companied for years; not know the great teacher who had instructed and warned and comforted him; not know the great Master who had wrought such miracles, who had healed the sick and raised the dead; not know him whom he had declared to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; not know him whom he had seen transfigured on the mountain; not know him with whom he had sat at the table the previous evening, and who had warned him of his danger? What a fall from the height on which he had stood a few hours before when he had said, "I will follow thee into prison and to death"! How humiliating, too, his position in the view of the bystanders, the priests, the officers, the mob! What a view must Peter's conduct have given to all around of the character of Jesus! He who had preached the glad tidings of salvation throughout Galilee and Judea is now ashamed of the gospel itself and of the author of it. The multitude would judge of the Master by the disciples,—by Judas who had betrayed him for money, by Peter who had become

ashamed of him, — and conclude of all alike that they were hypocrites and deceivers, and capable of the basest deceit. What a reproach is the disciple bringing on his Master! How is Christ wounded in the house of his friends! If the dark spirit of Satan can experience any momentary feeling of joy and triumph in the turmoil of passions which rage and chafe forever, more furious than the fire that is not quenched, or the troubled waves of the lake of brimstone, we can conceive him rejoicing in the thought that Christ's cause was crushed forever. The shepherd is smitten and the sheep are scattered. The Master is to be crucified, and the disciples are ashamed of him.

But God maketh the wrath of man and of devils to praise him. Jesus had prayed for Peter, even as he is still interceding for his people in heaven; and so his faith, though faltering, did not altogether fail him. The sorrows of Jesus arising from the desertion of friends and the malice of foes were even now making atonement for transgression, and from this fall Peter was to be raised by an upholding hand, and to go forth throughout the world publishing that gospel which is eventually to overthrow the dominion of Satan and raise the fallen. This brings us to consider

## III.

THE RECOVERY OF PETER, THROUGH THE PRAYER  
OF JESUS SUSTAINING HIS FAITH.

"Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"

Peter had brought himself into a most humbling position, and was careering on from one deed of madness to another. Had he been treated according to his deserts, Christ would have allowed him to reap as he was sowing. He had denied with an oath the Lord that bought him, and Jesus might have left him to reap the consequences of his own sin. He might have cast him off as he did Judas, and Satan might have taken full possession of him as he did Judas, and I know not to what far lengths of wickedness he might have gone. But for the restraints laid on him, Peter's case might have been like that of the man who swept and garnished his house, but who yielded to temptation, and seven spirits entered into the empty dwelling, and his latter end was worse than the first; he might have been tempted to abandon Christ, and give himself up to Sadducean unbelief, or to try to find peace in the formal rites and traditions of the pharisees.

It is of vast moment that Christians should know wherein lies the secret of their strength. It lies

first of all in the intercession of Christ, and secondly in their remaining faith.

1. It does not lie primarily in yourselves, — in the liveliness of your feelings or the strength of your resolutions. When under strong religious sentiment, or when you feel your purpose to be fixed, you may conclude that you can never by any possibility fall away. Alas! if your confidence is not resting on something more substantial, you will only find it terminating in disappointment. Your feelings may be lively at present, but what security have you that they may not in a very brief period be as dull and sluggish as they are now excited and elevated? Purposes formed in our own strength are like the writing upon the sand which is swept away by the first breath of the tempest or the first swelling of the tide. There are tides in the moods of man's mind just as there are tides in the ocean; and because the tide is flowing now, this is no evidence of its continuing to flow, — it may rather show that it will soon ebb and recede. The believer's steadfastness does not lie in himself, but in another. His strength is in the foundation on which he rests, and that foundation is the Rock of Ages. He is kept from falling, not by his native vigor, but by the arm on which he leans. Being united to Christ in the everlasting covenant, he is safe through the care of him who is commissioned to watch over him. He has been purchased by the blood of Christ, and Christ guards the possession

bought at so great a price, and lest any hurt it he watches it night and day. As he died for his people on earth, so he pleads for them in heaven, and ever appears in the presence of God for them in the attitude of intercession. They may, indeed, by the power of remaining corruption fall into sin which brings them to shame; but from this state they will be speedily brought back. Not, be it observed, by any meritorious principle in themselves. How was it that Peter was restored? The cause was to be found in the work of Christ. "I have prayed for thee." He was recovered, not by the meritorious power and efficacy of his own prayers, but by the prayers of Christ. When Peter was brought to repentance he prayed; but there is a previous question, — What brought him to repentance? If Christ had not first prayed for him, he had never prayed for himself. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." You remember that in the battle between the Israelites and the Amalekites in the wilderness, it was when Moses seated on a mountain above held up his hand that Israel prevailed. So it is when Christ is holding up his hands for us in heaven that we are able to conquer on earth.

2. There was, however, a secondary power, and this was Peter's faith. In consequence of the intercession of Christ, Peter's faith never altogether failed him. Perhaps we are to discover some remaining faith in the very circumstance that he followed Christ, though

at a distance; that "he followed afar off." And it is ordered that his faith, which for a time seemed to be overwhelmed, suddenly springs up with more than its former force. Let it be observed that while God keeps all those who are truly united to him, he does not keep them in sin. When they fall into sin he recovers them by bringing them to repentance. It was ordered that as Peter was hurrying on in his headlong career the cock crew, and at the same time Jesus turned round and looked him in the face. By the one circumstance he was reminded of his guilt, and by the other of the love of Jesus; and "he went out and wept bitterly."

His crowded bosom may have been agitated for a time by a number of conflicting feelings and purposes. At first pride may have prompted him to stifle these rising convictions, so painful in themselves, and giving him so humbling a view of his character. May I not despise him who is now being condemned and is soon to suffer death? May I not give vent to my deep passion in setting him at defiance, or by joining in the cry of his persecutors? No; he feels that were he to do so, he would be kicking like the restive ox against the goads of conscience, resisting the strivings of the Spirit and the pleadings of love. But may I not flee into the desert, bury myself in solitude, and forget all that is past? No; he feels that he cannot forget what is past, that the remembrance of it will go with him like his shadow wherever he goes, and would dwell with him even in the remotest

lodging-place in the wilderness. He may now have been tempted to conclude that his iniquity is so great that it cannot be forgiven. "How indignant was I when I saw Judas heading the band of officers; and yet now I have been guilty of sin scarcely less heinous!" and as he thought of this he may almost have been maddened into despair, and may have been tempted to act as Judas was doing.

The apostle (2 Cor. vii.) speaks of two kinds of repentance, — "the sorrow of the world that worketh death," and the "godly sorrow" that "worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." Now, it is a striking circumstance that both these kinds of repentance were exhibited about the same time by two apostles. It is said of Judas that he "repented," but it was to go out and hang himself. Whatever may have been his motives in joining the company of the disciples, he never had had faith, and Jesus had not prayed for him, and so, drifting along with nothing to keep him back, he goes to his own place. But Jesus had prayed for Peter, and his faith shone forth like the sun coming out from a cloud. His desponding feelings now gave way to more pleasing ones. If the crowing of the cock reminded him in so startling a way of his sin, the look that Jesus gave him reminded him of the love in the Saviour's bosom. "True, my sin is great, but there is enough of merit in the sufferings which Jesus is now enduring to atone for it all. It is of the deepest dye, but there is blood flowing from the wounds of Jesus to cleanse it all

away. It was indeed most ungrateful, most inexcusable in me to deny so kind a master; but it will be adding open rebellion to ingratitude, now to turn away from that look of love." A sweet view of mercy and forgiveness like the look which his loving Master gave him now began to dawn upon the darkness, and the clouds and the shadows flee away.

Such feelings as these rose and fell during the two days that elapsed before Jesus rose from the dead. And "what carefulness it wrought in him, yea, what clearing of himself, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" Peter heard of the crucifixion of Christ, he heard of his burial, and what a Sabbath did he spend on the day that intervened between Christ's burial and resurrection! Possibly never man spent a more profitable Sabbath since the first Sabbath when Adam and Eve walked amidst the bowers of Eden as the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God did shout for joy over the birth of a new world. Amid all the reproaches he heaped on himself, hope never forsook his bosom. Early in the morning of the first day of the week he went out to the sepulchre expecting, and yet scarcely knowing what to expect. When he reached the sepulchre he found it empty. How strange! Soon a message is brought him, "Go and tell the disciples and Peter, that the Lord is risen." The message is to all the disciples; but it is specially to Peter: "Go and tell Peter." "Why am I singled out,—I, who not only fled as the others, but was

ashamed of him and denied him?" Surely there was never love like this love. What a tumult of grateful feelings, of love, hope, joy, now filled his bosom! How he longed to see his Master once more! Christ had prayed for him, and his faith instead of failing became stronger. Satan had sifted him as wheat, but the storm only blew away the chaff and left the wheat purer than it had ever been before.

It is thus that every believer should act when he has been led into sin. Upon coming to discover this he should weep bitterly over his sin and come anew to the fountain that has been opened for sin and uncleanness. Not only so, but he is to gather lessons and additional motives to activity in the service of God from his very fall. This brings us finally to consider

#### IV.

##### THE COMMAND, "WHEN THOU ART CONVERTED, STRENGTHEN THY BRETHREN."

"When thou art converted." Peter had been converted before, when he had been called from his ships on the Lake of Galilee to become a disciple. But now he is converted anew. Jude speaks of certain hardened sinners as being "twice dead." There are some believers who need to be twice converted. Their faith is so weak, their affections are so dull, and they have so little spiritual life, that they need to be convinced of sin and anew quickened in the love and service of God. All their graces have become so

languid, their affections so carnal, and they are so devoted to the world, that they need to be brought out of the horrible pit and the miry clay. Or they have fallen into such offensive sin that in order to recover them they need very much the same converting grace as that which at first brought them to Christ. Whenever this is imparted, the soul is rendered greatly more lively and zealous in the service of God.

In this conversion there was much searching. This we learn from the interview with which our Lord favored Peter after his resurrection. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" was the question; and Peter could answer, "Thou knowest that I love thee." But again the question is put, and Peter gives a like answer. Yet a third time the same question was put and pressed: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And Peter was grieved because he asked him this the third time. It is evident that the whole scene of his fall now rushed upon his mind. He could not but discover that as he was thrice questioned in the court of the high priest, he should now be thrice questioned by our Lord. It was proper that as he had thrice denied him he should also thrice confess him. Three times had these lips declared, "I know not the man," and it was befitting that three times they should declare, "Thou knowest that I love thee." The open acknowledgment now that he is converted must correspond to his former denial. His courage must be a counterpoise to his previous cowardice. Christ freely forgives the sins of those who come to him;

## GOSPEL SERMONS.

s of them that wherein they have  
past they do so no more.  
According to the sins of which you are  
at your love and zeal now be in the ser-  
Have you been at any time ashamed of  
now be an additional reason for your  
in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Have you been wrong and brought reproach upon  
morality or religion, seek now to do good, were it  
only to counteract the evil. In consideration of all  
that has been done for your soul, see that ye now  
recommend religion to others.

"Restore unto me," said David, after having fallen into sin and been rebuked by God,—"restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Such is ever the blessed issue of the soul being restored after a fall. From his fall the man has learned the strength of sin and become more thoroughly acquainted with the deceitfulness of the human heart, the wiles of Satan, and the seductive influence of temptation, and is therefore the better able to warn others. From his recovery he has learned experimentally what is the power of Divine grace, and is the better able to commend it to others. In the reconciliation he has received new tokens for good from God, new expressions of favor, and his love is greatly increased in consequence; and in the strength of that love he would freely give to others what he has himself freely received. In

the grateful consciousness and remembrance of the strength he has received he proceeds to strengthen the brethren.

When Peter was able to say, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," our Lord said unto him, "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," and again, "Feed my sheep." In obedience, and in the strength of love and grace, Peter went forth to preach the gospel everywhere to young and old.

This is a powerful motive in setting forth Christians to do good. One might be inclined to wonder how God should have sent forth such men as Peter, weak and erring, to preach the gospel of salvation which had been purchased by the blood of his own Son. Might not angels have been appropriately commissioned to such a work? But if we reflect further, we may see that angels, who had never sinned themselves, could not have addressed sinners so powerfully, so tenderly and sympathizingly, as those who had sinned and been restored. They of all others could tell most impressively of the danger to which men are exposed, and the means of escape. Who, I may ask, are the best comforters of those that mourn? Every one will answer: Those who have themselves been in sorrow. They can reach depths and secrets of the heart which others cannot reach. They can open fountains which will not flow at the command of others. Thus it is that Jesus is such a comforter. He suffered and became perfect through suffering, and is able to sympathize with and succor them that are

in trouble. Now, on a like principle men who have been converted themselves are best suited to convert others. Those who have got strength tell their brethren where strength is to be had. This motive sends forth men to feed the lambs, to feed the sheep, to become Sabbath-school teachers, to spread a hallowed influence in the social circle, to take part in prayer-meetings, to become ministers, to become missionaries. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." When God's people have the joy of his salvation, then they teach transgressors God's way, and sinners are converted unto him.

## THE ROYAL LAW OF LOVE.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. — ROM. xiii. 10.

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well. — JAMES ii. 8.

IN these passages there is a reference to three things,—to Love, to Law, and to a King. I see before me an arch set up on earth, and spanning the heavens; the one side is Law, the other side is Love, and the keystone binding and crowning the whole is God. Our theme is the Royal Law of Love. Let us contemplate Love and Law first separately, and then in their combination in God.

### I.

#### LOVE.

It may manifest itself in two forms, which should be carefully distinguished.

*The Love of Complacency.* We delight in the object or person beloved. It is thus that the mother clasps her infant to her bosom; thus that the sister interests herself in every movement of her little brother, and is proud of his feats; thus that the father, saying little, but feeling much, follows the

career of his son in the trying rivalries of the world; thus that throughout our lives our hearts, if hearts we have, cling round the tried friends of our youth; thus that the wife would leave this world with her last look on her husband; thus that the father would depart with his sons and his daughters around his couch. There is a "last look which love remembers," — that given, for instance, when the ship moves away with the dear friend in it, or when the soul leaves the earth to wing its way to heaven. Love looks out for the persons beloved. The mother soon discovers her son in that crowd; the blacksmith

"Hears his daughter's voice  
Singing in the village choir."

The believer will steal away in fancy from the busy scenes of life to meet with his Saviour; and I am persuaded that when he reaches heaven he will recognize, without requiring to be told, the One whom he has so loved when on earth. In a higher sphere and in an older age, even from the beginning, the love of God, of God who is love, was exercised in the fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; for the eternal Logos says, "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him," and "my delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 30, 31).

*The Love of Benevolence.* This is a higher form of love. In this we not only delight in the contemplation and society of the persons beloved; we wish well to them, we wish them all that is good.

"Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." We will oblige them if we can; we will serve them if in our power; we will watch for opportunities of promoting their welfare; we will make sacrifices for their good. This love is ready to flow forth towards relatives and friends, towards neighbors and companions, towards all with whom we come in contact; it will go out towards the whole family of mankind. We are ready to increase their happiness, and in the highest exercises of love to raise them in the scale of being, and to exalt them morally and spiritually. The love of God thus manifests itself in multiplying happiness, in spreading holiness. He is not only Light, but the Fountain of lights; and the light that is in him, like that of the sun, shines on all around.

God is known by his works. He made us, and not we ourselves. He provides for our wants; he cares for us, and is ready to guide and to comfort us. Higher than all, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Abraham saw all this in the mount which he called Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." He had been commanded to offer his son in sacrifice; he had travelled with him three whole days, exposed to such questions: "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" He had bound

him on the altar, and taken up the knife to slay him; but now, to his inexpressible relief, he heard the voice, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son." Abraham must then have comprehended, and we, by paying a visit to that Mount of the Lord, can conceive how great the love of God, who spared Isaac, but spared not his own Son, but gave him freely to the death in our room and stead. "Herein indeed is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

This second is the highest aspect of love. The other belongs in man to a lower department of his nature. It is an exercise merely of emotional attachment, and may contain nothing virtuous or holy; it may be merely like the attachment of a dog to its master. The love of benevolence is of a higher sort; we wish to do good, we strive to do good, to those whom we love. The one is like a genial heat in a closed apartment; the other is like a fire radiating on all around. The one is a lake, reflecting heaven on its bosom; the other is a fountain, welling up and carrying with it a refreshing influence. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in

peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" It is this love of benevolence that is "the fulfilling of the law." It flows out in a great number and variety of forms: in compassion, in pity, in tenderness, in long-suffering, in patience.

The high priest in old time wore a breastplate with twelve precious stones; but every true Christian is a priest, and carries on his breast a more ornamental tablet, thus described: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Christians in this world of sin, sorrow, and suffering have a means of showing love, such as is not available to angels in the spotless mansions of heaven; they can, and should, like their great Master, "bear the contradiction of sinners," and should "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are gone out of the way."

But it may be asked, How can this benevolence be exhibited by us towards God, who is independent of us, and needs not our aid? The answer is, We identify ourselves with him, and strive to promote his glory, and the causes in which he is interested. We make it our prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy

will be done on earth as it is in heaven." True, we have to say (Ps. xvi. 2, 3), "My goodness extendeth not to thee;" but we should add, "but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight," and in loving whom we feel that we are loving God.

These two forms of love, while they may be distinguished, should never be separated. But in fact they have often been divorced the one from the other. How often do men show the love of complacency without the love of benevolence! They delight in the society of, and they receive gratification from, persons whom they do not seek to benefit. They do worse: they injure those to whom they are attached, as the ivy is apt to destroy the tree which it embraces and adorns. They do so by indulging, by flattering, by tempting them. The doting mother spoils the child whom she so fondles. The seducer ruins the unhappy one whom he clasps in his foul embrace. There is a love that is not lovely. What is claimed as free love is not love, but lust. It is, in fact, a deceptive form of selfishness. For our gratification and pleasure we lay hold of and hug to our bosoms objects which we only corrupt. I apprehend that much of human sinfulness consists in tearing asunder what should be kept united, in selfishly delighting in persons, and turning them to our uses only to tempt and destroy them. It has often been remarked that the worst things are the perversion of good things. Abused intellectual gifts make the

dangerous villain. Abused sensibilities make the accomplished tempter. Abused affections gender the keenest of all misery.

How terrible the chasms produced by sin in our world! That virtuous mother looks with unutterable horror upon the conduct of her drunken son; yet she would die for him at any moment, provided she could thereby save him. Nay, has not sin, by its dissevering and destructive power, kept asunder in a sense what had ever before been united in the mind of God? It has been disputed among theologians whether God can love or be a Father to sinners yet in their sins. The distinction I have drawn solves the question. I cannot very well see how God should look on the sinner with complacency. "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. vii. 11). "I hate them with perfect hatred" (Ps. cxxxix. 22). But, on the other hand, he loves the sinner; loves him with an everlasting love; he loves him with the love of compassion. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." In a like way our Lord was the friend of publicans and sinners; not that he approved of their conduct, — he reprobated it more than the Pharisee did, who turned away from them in scorn, — but he wept over the coming doom on Jerusalem; and his very purpose in coming to this world was to seek and save that which is lost. In

this, as in every other particular, we are to copy him who has set us an example that we should follow his steps. It is not expected of us that we should have pleasure in the society of the licentious, the selfish, the malignant; but we are to feel for them; as human beings we are to pity them, and seek to allure them to God and to good.

## II.

### LAW.

Law was in the nature of God from all eternity, and is the instrument of his government; it was inscribed on the nature of man when he was created; it was graven by God's own finger on the granite blocks of Sinai; it was spoken in gentle and attractive tones by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, and it is written by God's own Spirit as a new commandment on the hearts of God's people. It goes with man wherever he goes, to tell him, if he is prepared to listen to it, what is right and what is wrong, and in the end to punish him if he refuses to obey. It is so essential a part of his nature that it will follow him into the regions below, to torment him more than the worm that never dies, than the fire that is not quenched.

That law has been broken, but is still binding. When Moses came down from the Mount with the two tables, he threw them from him, and broke them, as he witnessed the wickedness of the children

of Israel. But he had just to reascend the Mount and have them written again by God's own finger. Which thing may be unto us for an allegory. Man has broken God's law; but that law retains all its claims, and ever renews them. The law is embodied in the gospel. All this was instructively represented in the ark of the covenant, laid up in the holiest of all, and typifying the new covenant. On the lid of it were the cherubim, overshadowing the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat; and the promise was given: "There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the cherubim." But within the ark were the two tables of stone. Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil; the gospel, wherever it goes, carries within it the law fulfilled by Christ, the law still binding on his followers. There is a sense in which believers are free from the law; they are free from its curse: but in another sense they are still under it; they are not free from the obligation to obey it. When sinners come to Christ he welcomes them. He says, Your sins be forgiven you; but he does not give them liberty to go back to their sins, but, "Go, and sin no more." Just as the father, after rejoicing over the return of his prodigal son, took him into his house to keep him in safety, so our Heavenly Father takes us into his family to train us to obedience. When the sinner comes to Christ, Christ pays his debts; but it is only to send him to pay his dues not in the oldness of the letter, but the newness of

the spirit. In heaven itself the soul, brought into unison with the law of love, will be fulfilling it to perfection; and the music of heaven will consist essentially in attuned hearts, each breathing its own melody, and all in harmony,—hearts in accord with the heart of God, and in accord with one another, and fulfilling the pleasure of God for ever and ever.

The law has two marked features.

*It is imperative.* It speaks as one having authority; it speaks in the name of God. It says, "Thou shalt do this, thou shalt not do that." "The Categorical Imperative" was the designation given it by the great German metaphysician. Its function is not to tell us what is, but what ought to be. All its affirmations are commands; all its negations are prohibitions. It has rewards rich and numerous for those who obey it; it has penalties certain and terrible for those who transgress it. God has a vicegerent to sustain it in the conscience, "which shows the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another." There is a witness within which constrains us to acknowledge its right to obedience.

*It is determinative.* It is categorical; it has its definite requirements which it cannot forego, and will not lower. "Guilty or not guilty," are the alternatives it proposes. It admits of no middle course or compromise; it accepts of no excuse; it will not listen to any plea or extenuation.

In this respect the order, the regularities of the physical world resemble it. Hence for the last two hundred years they have been called laws,—laws of Nature, as supposed to have been enacted by a law-giver. It is interesting to notice that they have been called “ordinances” in Scripture (Ps. cxix. 91). “They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.” We hear much in these times of the laws of Nature, of their being so fixed and immutable. Those who speak in this way are apt to forget that there is another law which is still more unchangeable, and shall abide when the heavens are rolled up like a scroll. It is by these two kinds of law, the one Moral, the “greater light,” and the other Natural, “the lesser light,” that God rules our world; by the one moral agents, by the other physical agents, making them all combine and conspire towards one good and grand end.

In one respect the two are alike: both are inflexible. But they differ. The laws of Nature admit of no exceptions. They cannot be changed except by him who appointed them. The will of man cannot arrest them. Gravitation is as ready to bring down an unsupported stone to crush us, as it is to keep the earth moving on beneficently in its sphere. The winds which drive on the vessel one day may sink it in the deep the next. The chemical affinities which prepare food to nourish us are ready to mix poison to kill us. On the other hand, moral laws

may be broken. We are now in the region of the will. In order to be a moral agent man must be a free agent. Love that is constrained is not love. Morality compelled is not true morality. So moral law may be broken, while physical law cannot. But moral law, properly understood, is quite as inflexible, as unrelenting, as natural law. If we neglect the laws of health, the consequences may be disease or death; but if we violate the laws of morality, the consequences may be, must be, much more fatal in a condemning conscience, or in judgments to descend in this life or the life to come. Natural law, which moves on so regularly, so irresistibly, so beneficently, is the fittest outward type and emblem of that moral law which rules the heaven and controls the earth.

### III.

#### RELATION OF LOVE AND LAW IN GOD.

The planet is held in its sphere by two influences: one impelling, the other staying it. So it is with moral beings; they are drawn by love, but it is love regulated by law. It is well that the earth should have an attraction towards the sun, without which it would wander into an outer region of coldness, darkness, and destruction; but were there no restraining power it would be drawn into the sun's atmosphere, and be consumed by his heat. In like man-

ner, moral excellence implies of necessity these two things, love and law; the one to attract, the other to guide in the right path.

It is not easy to embody in human conceptions, and to express in human language, the relation of law and love. We know that the two are closely connected. Their connection is in God, the source of both. Even as God is the origin of all other things, — of nature, of force, of matter, of mind, — so is he also the origin of love and law. All these streams, if we follow them up sufficiently far, carry us to the fountain. Love is the refreshing water; the law is the channel for it to flow in; and the spring is the bosom of God. "Let us love one another, for love is of God." Charity is the highest of all the graces: "There abideth these three, — faith, hope, and charity; but the greatest of these is charity." But then charity never tries to set itself above law; if it did so, it might work only mischief. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Love takes the form of a commandment. When asked by the lawyer, "Which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Thus indissolubly are charity and commandment joined in Scripture. It is love that makes us like unto God, who

is love; but the love of God is a love regulated by eternal justice.

We cannot by any process of analysis get rid of either of these elements. Defective systems of ethics arise from omitting one or other, or not giving each its due place. A stoic, a pharisaic morality leaves out love, and presents only the expressionless form of law. Utilitarianism leaves out eternal and unchangeable obligation, and offers a flexible morality, suiting itself to supposed results. My illustrious predecessor, Jonathan Edwards, the greatest thinker that this country has produced, in whose dazzling beams the others of us appear merely as the smaller planets passing over the disc of the sun, has made a bold attempt to resolve all virtue into love. But then he has to make it love to being as being. The very statement shows that there is another element as well as love. There is love to *being as being*, showing that being has claims, and that there must be some means of determining the claims of being as being. We ought to love God and our neighbor. Yes, but whence this word "ought," so full of meaning? Why should I love any one but myself? Our deepest nature gives the response, and will continue to do so, whether we attend to it or no. All this implies that alongside of love there is law, commanding and demanding. Far as the eye can reach, the two are seen to run parallel. I do not say that they never meet, for they meet in the nature of God and of all

holy beings; and, though often dissevered here, they will meet at last in the character of saints in heaven, with whom love will be law, and law will be love.

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." There is no propriety in drawing invidious comparisons as to the relative importance of the two. It might be argued that law is the higher; for it commands love, says when it is to flow, and where it is to stay. But then love is the very end for which the law exists; the end of the commandment is charity. Law without love is a mere form without life; love without law is a life without a body in which to reside. Law without love is a channel without a stream; love without law may be a stream bursting forth and spreading destruction. Let the two revolve round each other like binary stars, each with its own color, the one the complement of the other. Let Righteousness stand forever on the pedestal on which he has been set up, with his high look and unbending mien, the master and the guardian; and ever beside him, beneath him, and leaning upon him, yet beautiful and graceful as he, let there be seen Love, with smiles upon her face and gifts in her hands.

I believe they were never separated till sin appeared. Alas! that seducer and corrupter has severed them. There has arisen a stern doctrine, which has no tenderness; whose gaze is as unmoved and unmovable as that of the Egyptian sphinx looking out from its desert of sand. If there be theologians

still dwelling in a cold palace of ice, I recommend them to let the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon it and thaw it. I look upon the Shorter Catechism as upon the whole the best compend of Scripture truth which we have in any language; but I have sometimes felt that there is less of love in it than there is in the Scriptures, and that it serves a good end when the teacher puts a smile upon its countenance to attract the youth who has to learn it. It was rather an empty ark which they had to look into in Solomon's time, when they found nothing there but the tables of stone, and not their accompaniments, — Aaron's rod that budded, signifying life from the dead; nor the pot of manna, typifying food for the weak. But the defect I am now speaking of belongs rather to the seventeenth than the nineteenth century. We are now more in danger of a sentimental and a simpering faith, acting the part of a Delilah, professing love to the man who boasts that he is strong, only in the end to show how weak he is, and to consign him to blindness and darkness. Let us have charity, they say: but charity without principle to guide it may distribute its gifts very indiscriminately and injuriously. Let us have fire, they insist: but we cannot have fire without fuel to feed it; and fire cannot be allowed to burn and consume in every place, and as it pleases. There should be a vessel to contain the pleasant incense that we offer, otherwise it will soon dissipate into inanity.

By all means let us make our religion attractive, as attractive as the character of Jesus. But Jesus came to fulfil the law and the prophets; and while he allowed the woman that was a sinner to bathe his feet with her tears, he drove out those who polluted his temple, and made those fall back who assailed him. And we read of what I suppose is the most terrible thing in the universe, "the wrath of the Lamb." It is doubtless to this that reference is made when it is said that "our God is a consuming fire." If we would make love to fulfil its divine mission, we must associate with it the eternal truth with which it is combined in the Word. Let us never allow ourselves to suppose that we can improve the Scriptures by shearing off some pointed truths supposed to be offensive. Let the sun shine there in the heavens in all its brightness, even though it should dazzle our eyes; we need all its light to show us the way in which we should walk; the plants need all its heat to mature and to ripen them. There are statements in that Word of which I wished, as I remember, in the petulance of youth, that they had not been there. But I have been made by experience, often bitter, to see the truth and awful importance of them. Whether we see it now or no, all believers will see in the end that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

There is a theology called the orthodox, sometimes known as the Princeton theology, defended by good and great men some of them now seeing the truth still more clearly in the mansions above, but some of them still spared to us. It is in fact simply the Reformation theology. It is the theology of Paul in all his epistles. If any of us have in any respect fallen beneath the spirit of Jesus and of the Word, let us acknowledge our fault and amend; but we dare not meanwhile abandon the truth which has been held so firmly and defended so ably among us. If any of us have been supercilious, saying, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," let us hasten to bow ourselves at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him to be meek and lowly. If any have allowed their orthodoxy, like the frost, to cover over and cool their humanity, let them place their hearts under the beams of him who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust," and their systems will be better. But whatever improvement we may make in cultivating and cherishing the spirit of charity, there is one thing we can never do, and that is, to lower the standard of doctrine or of duty. Amidst the shiftings of human fancy and speculation which spring up and wither like grass, Bible truth is founded as on a rock, and "endureth forever."

It is true that there have been men who have preached or practised a pharisaic morality; that is, a law without love. A law has been set forth and

enforced which is not the law of love, and has driven men away from God, who is love, and from the gospel, which is essentially a message of reconciliation from God to sinful men. The terrors of the law have been used, not as by Paul to persuade men, but to tempt or drive them to rebellion or resistance. In ages past law has been used lawlessly by monarchs and by masters. But in the present day the tendency seems all the other way. If there were tyrannies in Old World monarchies which we in these times are not slow to condemn, there is licentiousness in New World republics which it might be as useful and important for us to expose and condemn. If fathers erred two centuries ago in being somewhat too rigid with their children, it is possible that in these times they may not be sufficiently faithful in restraining self-indulgence and in training to habits of self-sacrifice. If some preachers, in ages gone by, preached hell and damnation instead of Christ, it is possible that some in these times are so relaxed by a weak charity that they have not the courage or faithfulness to bid men flee from the wrath to come. If there have been preachers in certain ages who insisted on nothing but stern duty, there are not a few in our day who recommend love without the due restraints of law, who are tampering with the marriage relation, lowering the sacredness of wedlock, and allowing such liberty of divorce as is fitted to break up the family, — which, I may remark, is the only means of securing proper

moral culture, and training the rising generation to virtue. More evil may arise from lawless love which is fascinating, than from hatred which is repulsive. There is a teaching in our day antagonistic to the old and orthodox theology. It does not take, it cannot be made to take any scientific form. It would let down doctrine and exalt charity, and would thereby make religion easier and more attractive — as they suppose. It is "Broad Church" in England, delivering itself from all creed. It is the "Religion of Humanity" in this country, instead of the "Religion of Divinity for Humanity." It would free humanity from certain restraints and sacrifices, with the view of exalting it. It is not just the same, but it is analogous to the attempt in the last century to do away with doctrine on the pretence of exalting morality, and which led to dry High Churchism in England, to Moderatism in Scotland and Ulster, to Rationalism on the Continent of Europe, and to Unitarianism in this country; and ended in all in the decay of religion and the lowering of morality. The new gospel which has appeared among us is evidently running a like career. Doctrine is discarded first, duty goes next, in the next man or the next age.

It is a profound saying of one of the brothers Hare: "To form a correct judgment concerning the tendency of any doctrine, we should rather look at the forms it bears in the disciples than in the teacher. For he only made it: they are made by it." We

may now see the kind of characters that are made in this school of love and humanity. There was first a turning away from the old doctrine, and this has been followed by a turning away from the old morality. The worship of humanity will not tend to elevate humanity. If religion is to have any elevating tendency, it must look up to and worship that which is above it and tends to draw us to it. "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Love and Law, with God in both, is the sum of all morality. We should regard it as our highest end to come under the two in their union. The one will give motive to exertion, which will be directed in the right way by the other. The one will impel to all that is good, the other will restrain from all evil. The one will set you out and carry you on in the journey, the other will show you the path you ought to take. The one will be the spring of waters, the other the channel in which to flow. The one will be the centrifugal, the other the centripetal force, to keep you circulating round the Sun of Righteousness. The two will guide and guard you through life and on to heaven, where they melt into one in God's character and in yours, and love will be law, and law love.

## HOW TO VIEW OUR FELLOW-MEN.

Henceforth know we no man after the flesh. — 2 Cor. v. 16.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” As a new creature, he who is in Christ takes a new view of almost all the objects by which he is surrounded, or which he is called to contemplate. The eyes of his understanding being enlightened, he sees them in a new light, — and that a true light, — and not under the false lustre which before hid their character; in other words, he sees them no longer after the flesh, that is, according to corrupt human nature, but after the spirit, as a spiritually-enlightened man does. He gets a new view of sin; before, he was dallying with it and seeking to extract pleasure from it for a season, rolling it as a sweet morsel under his tongue, regarding it as something light and trifling and easily forgiven; now, he sees it to be exceeding sinful, — its sweets to be obtained only with the penalty of its sting being thrust into him. He gets a new view of Christ; before, he knew him after the flesh, nor

did he see his need of him, and often felt as if Jesus were troubling him ; and his feeling was, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" now, he sees him as the very Saviour he needs, and looks upon him as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely! He takes a new view of time and of this world: before, they seemed to him as if they were all in all as he sailed along their creeks and eddies ; now, they are discovered to be but bays in the great ocean of eternity, seen stretching before him as an ocean without a shore. He takes a new view of himself: for long he regarded himself with feelings of self-complacency ; but now, his pride being broken down, he sees himself as God sees him, and repents in dust and ashes. Among other objects seen in a new light, he takes a different view of his fellow-men. Henceforth he knows no man after the flesh.

But before enlarging on this subject, there is an error at the other extreme against which we need to be warned: it is the mistake of those who would cast aside human nature that they may the better glorify God. Now, human nature, as God made it at first, and as God, by his Spirit, may make it anew, is in itself the grandest object which our world presents. "On earth there is nothing great but man; in man, nothing great but mind." Let us not try to mutilate it, much less to destroy it, by cutting off branches or limbs, which will only make the frame one-sided and misshapen. I am sure that a monk—a priest sepa-

rated from all tender domestic ties — is not the person likely to do most good in families, to gain the confidence of anxious mothers and of little children. I am not sure that the stiff formalists or the narrow evangelicals of modern Protestantism are the best fitted to gain the hearts of the great mass of the people, — say of young men and maidens, with wicked hearts no doubt, as we all have, but not more wicked because these persons, from their age, are buoyant and playful. Of this I am sure, that they are the best Christians, that they are likely to be the most influential ministers, who obey the apostolic command, and “rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Did not Jesus assume our nature for this, among other ends, that he might more effectually win the hearts of men, women, and children, who are thereby encouraged to come to him; while others, like the apostles, might forbid them? “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.” The human love of the Saviour attracts us human beings quite as much as his divine love. He was called by his disciples “the Son of God;” he called himself “the Son of Man.” “Jesus wept” is the shortest verse in the Bible, but no verse has been more effective in drawing men’s hearts to Jesus. By all means, as we point men’s eyes to him, say, “Ecce Deus!” for we may see his divinity shining through the veil of his humanity; but let us also say, “Ecce homo!”

for it is his humanity which first meets our eye. In heaven, when we look up to it, we see "him that sitteth on the throne," but we see also "him that was slain;" we see the throne, but "in the very midst of it a lamb as it had been slain." By all means let us seek to have more of the divine nature of which we are partakers, having been made in the divine image at first, and as being created anew in the divine likeness, and let us seek to have this divinity shining brighter and brighter within us; but let us not neglect, at the same time, to cherish and cultivate our humanity, and among other things, our social and sympathetic feelings. I believe that a man is better fitted than an angel would be to address mankind. I am sure that a converted sinner, under Christ, is the most appropriate of all agents for speaking to sinners. The man who has escaped the fire is the most likely to be earnest and practical in urging and helping others to flee from it. The mother who has lost a child is the best fitted to speak to another mother grieving over the death of a dear boy. On a like principle I maintain that one who has rejoiced and suffered, who has hoped and feared as man, is the best adapted to address a fellow-man in his joys and in his sorrows.

But, on the other hand, the man who is a new creature in Christ Jesus is led to take a new and higher view of his fellow-men, and, in consequence, to perform certain duties toward them. In particular: —

## I.

*We have come to see the worth of our own souls, and we know that the souls of others are of equal worth.* Christians, there may have been a time when you set no value on your own souls; when you were going about inquiring, "Who will show us any good?" and at that time, having no concern about the salvation of your own souls, you felt little or no interest in the redemption of the souls of others. But now you have seen that "the redemption of the soul is precious." What were a man profited if he were to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? You now really believe this, and feel yourselves, in consequence, to be surrounded by immortal beings, the worth of whose souls you cannot estimate. The father knows and realizes that these children who cluster round his knee in the evening when he comes home from his labors have souls, which, like his own, will exist forever. The mother, as she rocks her infant to rest on her bosom, knows that the heart which has begun to beat in that little frame will not find rest till it is laid on the breast of Jesus. Every brother and sister and dear friend and companion you have, every person you meet with in the social party and in the market-place, has a soul which, like your own, will be existing in that bright world above or that dark world below, when ten thousand millions of ages have run

their course. Every man we meet with in this world, though we should never meet with him again, will meet with us at the day of judgment. Ay, the wicked will there meet with those with whom they sinned when on earth, — with those whom they seduced by their influence, their example, or their false reasoning, into sin or error. My friends, we are not surrounded by the mere creatures of a day, with whom we may pass our time in utter levity, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" we are encompassed by responsible and undying men, whose souls shall exist as long as the angels exist, as long — with reverence be it spoken — as long as God himself exists! What manner of persons ought we to be in such society? How dare ye sin in such company, and among such witnesses? When the eyes of hundreds look up towards us ministers on the Sabbath, we must have something carefully forethought to tell them in the name of Christ. When they would sleep, bodily or mentally, in their pews, we must ring in their ears a message like that which came from the mariners to Jonah: "Arise, thou sleeper, and call on thy God!"

## II.

*We see that as by nature we are under the sentence of condemnation, so others are under the same sentence. There may have been a time when we*

had no sense of the evil of sin; we loved sin, and had pleasure in them that loved it, like ourselves. But now, our consciences being awakened to see how offensive sin is, we feel that we have to look abroad on a world lying in wickedness, in rebellion against its Maker and its Judge. Not that such a view as this will make the Christian feel less interest in his fellow-man, or tempt him to retire from the world in disgust. Such considerations will rather tend to rouse him from his torpor, to quicken and animate his love, as the breeze fans the flame. When is it that we think most of an earthly friend, and are most deeply interested in his welfare? Is it when he is known to be in safety, dwelling in security in the bosom of his family, far from violence or accident? Or is it not rather when he is in peril in the midnight journey, where robbers infest the path, or deep and rapid rivers have to be crossed, sweeping many an unguarded traveller from this world to the next; or living in a scene where he is breathing infection, or in which the arrows of death are flying all around? When is it that the wife thinks most of the husband, and the sister feels the deepest interest in the brother? Is it not when laid on a bed of distress, or when fighting with the billows of death? A love is then kindled which never burned before, and tears flow from eyes, the very fountains of which seem to have dried up by the scorching power of this world's anxieties. When does the mother think

most of the son who is on the wide ocean? Is it when it is so calm that it reflects the image of heaven upon its bosom; or, ruffled by the breeze, only to bear on the vessel? Is it not rather when the winds are raging round her dwelling, and in the sleepless night she pictures the vessel sinking in the awful depths, and hears the cry of her boy out from the roaring billows? My friends, it is the circumstance that man is lost, while yet he may be saved, which awakens that peculiarly deep and tender feeling in the breast of the believer! It was for the sake of the lost sheep that the shepherd penetrated into the wilderness; it was for the sake of the lost piece of money that the woman lighted the candle and swept the house; it was in compassion towards the lost son that the father ran out to meet him and embrace him in his arms. It was because the Father so loved the world that he gave his Son to suffer and to die for it. It was to seek and save that which was lost that Christ left the bosom of the Father and came to this cold world, and died amidst the agonies of the cross. Those who have the same mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus, will love the world which he loved; will, like him, when they see the multitude, have compassion on them, — have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are "out of the way," and will hasten to be fellow-workers with him in saving souls from death.

## III.

*As having attained the enjoyment of Christ's peace ourselves, we seek that others may share it with us.*

As long as we were without Christ and Christ's peace, we did not know the value of them, and so could not be expected heartily to recommend them to others,—just as the blind man cannot be expected to speak of the beauty of colors, or the deaf man of the loveliness of music. But when we have “tasted that the Lord is good;” when Christ has “become precious to us, as he is to all them that believe,” then we can enlarge upon our own experience,—“Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth will speak.” We have sold all that we have—our self-righteousness, our conceit, our lusts—to buy that pearl. We find that its worth is far more than the price paid for it; and so we can confidently commend it to others. We would not ourselves part with that peace for all that the world can give, for all its wealth and honors; and we feel that if we were but the instruments of communicating that peace to others, we would be conveying a greater amount of good than by the largest temporal benefits. Parents cannot leave their children a legacy so great as this. All God's people feel that they must share this blessing with others, and feel that they cannot bestow on their friends any gift so valuable. Without this, every good we

bestow may turn out an evil; with this, the value of every other good will be immeasurably enhanced. "When God's people have the joy of his salvation," then, as is said in Psalm fifty-first, they teach transgressors God's way, and sinners are converted unto him.

#### IV.

*When we love Christ ourselves, then our hearts are drawn towards those who, like us, love the Lord Jesus.* Man is, in his very nature, a social being. It is not good for man to be alone. He seeks for companionship, and the feelings which prompt him are gratified in the enjoyment of it. The principle on which man seeks for fellowship is that of kindred tastes. It is this principle abused, which congregates the wicked. They will speedily, as if by instinct, find out each other, and delight in each other's society and in the social gratification of their gross tastes. It is the same attraction, no longer perverted, but now sanctified, which brings together the children of God. Their common faith and love to a common God and Saviour, their heaven-born tastes and aspirations, will form a stronger bond of union than any that can band the men of this world together. They will seek out one another, they will be drawn to one another when they meet, and they will reciprocate one another's feelings. Should there be persons who have come from the

same district, who have been taught in the same school, who have worshipped in the same church, and who are now residing in the same foreign land, would they not, as it were, look out for one another, and, as they meet, recur to the scenes of their childhood and of their beloved land,—perhaps beloved, now that they are away from it, more than even when they were dwelling in it? And if men are thus prompted to fellowship by native feeling, will not those who are born from above, and who are citizens of heaven,—will not they, too, in this foreign land in which they are pilgrims and strangers, feel that they have many connecting links and ties of sympathy; and will not they, too, seek for fellowship one with another, and with all who, in every place, call on the name of the Lord Jesus? Those brothers and sisters who for many years have been members of the same family, love to meet with each other from time to time, to talk perhaps of the love and wisdom of a father, or mother, or brother, or sister gone before to the other world; and are not Christians all of one family, and why should they not meet to speak of a common Father in heaven, and of One who condescends to be called our elder Brother? “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name.” And who often has it happened that, when holding sacred converse with one

another, Jesus himself has joined them, as he did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus when they were conversing of the decease which he accomplished at Jerusalem! And though their eyes are let so that they do not see him, yet their hearts burn within as he talks with them and opens to them the Scriptures, and they know that it has been the Lord.

## V.

*These views and motives will impel those who are swayed by them to do good as God may give them opportunity.* "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." And there is a close and intimate connection between these two things,—between having the law in the heart, and teaching it to others. All genuine religion begins within, in the grace of God communicated to the heart, and forming there a well of living waters springing unto life eternal. But while it begins within, it does not end there; it begins within only as all streams commence in some mountain where are their heaven-fed fountains; but it flows out like the stream, and carries with it a refreshing and fertilizing influence. The grace of God in the

heart is represented as a seed, becoming a plant; as leaven, permeating the whole mass; as a new birth, growing to maturity; as a fire, becoming a flame. Supposing that he himself has got the new life, he will be anxious that others may possess the same. He may first be anxious about those of his own household, — his relatives and his friends; what has given peace to himself he knows will give peace to them, and so he goes and tells them of the treasure he has found. We see this illustrated in the case of the apostle Andrew. Having been called to be a disciple of Jesus, he abode with him one day, and that one day was sufficient to show him how delightful was his society; and on the morrow he went in search of his brother Peter, and told him what he had found. "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias; which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus."

It is in this way that the believing husband is sanctified, or blessed, to the unbelieving wife, and the believing wife is sanctified to the unbelieving husband. How often have husbands who obey not the Word been won in this way by the conversation of their wives, while they behold their chaste conversation coupled with fear. In this way parents have been blessed to their children, and standing before God have been enabled to say: "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me."

Watering, in this way, the objects immediately around them, Christian faith and zeal will flow towards more distant objects, towards particular districts and countries, and towards the world at large. The prayer will be that, beginning at Jerusalem,—that is, at home,—the gospel be preached to every creature. But what can I do for the benefit of the church and world? is the question put by many,—some not anxious to do anything, and some not seeing how they can do anything. Now, it is quite true that if the whole work were to devolve on any one of us, we never could accomplish it. But the work is to be accomplished, not by every man doing the whole, but by every one laboring in his own sphere; as the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, not by every man seeking to build the whole wall, but building the part opposite his dwelling, so that it is recorded of this man and of that man that he built such a part of the wall lying opposite to his house; and of a particular person, who does not seem to have had a house, but to have been simply a lodger, that he built the part opposite his chamber. So it is by every one building the part of the wall which lies opposite to himself; by each one, like the Baptist of old, fulfilling his course; by each one doing the duty which devolves on him as a soldier fighting under Christ in the great army of the faithful, that the whole work is to be carried on and completed; this one taking up this field, and another that field, at home

or abroad, — going himself, or contributing to make others go.

This view of religion in living operation is very different, I am aware, from the picture which is drawn of what it ought to be by the worldly, and by them held forth to our admiration. These men are loud in praise of religion, in the general or in the abstract, but it must be something that never comes out in living exhibition; something unseen, inoffensive, and inoperative; afraid to give any testimony in behalf of Christ, and so wounding no man's conscience; a concealed light, and therefore not a reproach upon their own darkness. These men dare not denounce religion in the general, but they would oppose it and hunt it down whenever it makes any appearance. They would pay it all respect in general language and compliments, but they condemn every actual exercise of it. Nay, under a hypocritical profession of regard for that which they hate, they would tell you that religion is so ethereal in its nature that it is not fitted for society or the world; and, in the greatness of their regard for it, confine it to the closet and the heart. Such is the religion which the world would recommend to us as being most suited to its own tastes and least liable to disturb its self-complacency.

But this, certainly, is not the religion recommended in the Word of God, and exemplified in the character of Moses and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles. Religion, it is true, begins at

the heart; but in this respect it is like the blood, wherein is the life, which begins at the heart, but circulates to the farthest extremities. These men regard religion as the Jews looked upon the Saviour,—as a root out of dry ground; and it is, indeed, a root spreading out other roots, like Lebanon, but bringing forth branches which flourish and expand and bear precious fruit. These men would compare it to some feeble flame fed within a secret sanctuary, like the mysterious fire kept within the heathen temples; whereas God would have it rise in open day, like the flame of the morning and evening sacrifice, which rose towards heaven and before all men. These men would represent it as a hermit in a wilderness,—something secret and unseen; Christ describes it as a city placed on a hill, which cannot be hid. They would have religion hide itself, as a candle put under a bushel, and burning there with a feeble and sickly flame; Christ would have it to be as a light placed on a table and shining on all around. Ye are the light of the world; not shining by inherent light, but still shining by light reflected from the Sun of Righteousness as sunshine is reflected from all the objects surrounding us in the heavens and earth.

From this survey we see what is the grand function of the organized church,—it is to proclaim the way, sustain the truth, and propagate the life. We see, too, what is the grand aim of church ordinances. We are to secure, in regard to them,

that they be in thorough accordance with the Word of God, and that they be employed to edify the church, and not for the purpose of gratifying the senses or stimulating the imagination.

We further see what is the style of preaching most fitted to advance the kingdom of God. It is preaching founded on Scripture, that speaks of Christ, and speaks to all,—to rich and poor, to Greek and barbarian, to old and young. There is a kind of preaching which sprang up in New England, an age or two ago, and which has since travelled South and West, but which does not seem to me the best for alluring the great body of the people. The minister is a well-educated, thinking man, and he reads and ponders the most of the week, and he brings out to his people his cogitations on the Lord's Day. All well; I say the good householder must bring out of his treasure things new and old: his people will not thank him for throwing them what has cost him nothing. But then he brings out his own thoughts, ingenious it may be, but wire-drawn and abstruse, instead of God's Word, to which they are pinned, and from which, certainly, they do not grow. They are admired excessively by a select number of refined men and women, who are loud in praise of the preacher, and offer him a constant incense of adulation. But as to our children, who compose, or at least ought to compose, so large a proportion of every congregation, as to our servants, male

and female, our mechanics and day-laborers who have toiled all the week, they would feel an interest in the grand old truths of God scripturally and feelingly illustrated; but as to the peculiar notions or nostrums of this man's brain, they cannot understand them, or at least do not appreciate them, and in most cases they do not, thereby, suffer much loss. If this style prevails among those churches that require a highly educated ministry, I fear the common people will turn to those churches where Scripture truth is preached more freely and heartily. There is an affected originality about this kind of preaching, which, however, consists more in a peculiarity of mode than in substance or reality. I admit that Christ is commonly there, but he is disguised by so many ingenious adjuncts that a large body of the people do not see him. I think I perceive indications that our merchants, distracted all the week by anxious cares in their offices, and wishing to have a Sabbath of holy rest, are showing, by the kind of preachers that they are calling from this country and from abroad, that they have no predilection towards this artificial or notional style of preaching. Of this I am sure, that your truly learned men, when they come out from their books and their scientific pursuits, greatly prefer to listen to such words as Jesus uttered from the ship and on the mountain. Old Horace felt it to be a delight to sing *pueris et virginibus*; and depend upon it, that is the best preaching, and the

most popular in the end, which addresses the father and the daughter, the mother and the son, the mistress and the maid, the unlearned as well as the learned.

It is a great evil in our community, the separation of rich and poor, especially in our great cities. But it is vastly greater when it is permitted to enter the house of God, which is meant to counteract and soften the severances of the world. We have seen the beginning, but not the end of it. In so many of our city churches we see only the rich, and we wonder where the poor are. We are told, perhaps, that they are in churches for the poor. But would it not be better for the rich as well as for the poor that the two met together, thereby entering into the spirit of the passage, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou here, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not partial in yourselves?" Are we not falling in with this spirit when we systematically arrange that the rich and the poor do not worship in the same house of God? We all come into the world alike; we all leave the world alike; in heaven all are alike; and there is one other place where I would have all alike, and that is in the house of God,—

“ the rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all.”

But it is said that there are difficulties in the way. I admit it. But let the church acknowledge the evils, and set itself earnestly to meet them. Many of them will be found to arise from the artificial means of paying ministers by pew-rents, and admitting property-holding, with buying and selling, into the temple of God. This whole subject of the means of so supporting the ministry as that the rich and poor may meet together is calling for and demanding the consideration of the wisest and best men in our church; next always to the propagation of the gospel at home and abroad, it is about the most important which the churches can take up at this present time. We are insisting, very properly, on having an educated ministry, and this is greatly for the good of our people. The training for the ministry is the longest and most expensive demanded in any profession; but when the young men have undergone it the pay allowed in our congregations generally is not equal to that of our skilled artisans. The command is, “ Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things,” and is as binding as any precept in the Word of God. True, those of us who are called of God must preach the gospel whether we are properly remunerated or not. “ Woe be unto you if you preach not the gospel ! ” I say to every young man in our college who seems to be called from on high to the work. But if ministers

of the Word are required to make sacrifices, the members of the church, enjoying like privileges on earth, and seeking to reach the same in heaven, are required to do the same. This is a subject which the wisest and best men are now required to take up if they would enable the church to fulfil the grand end which it is fitted to accomplish.

## WAITING FOR GOD.

The Lord is good unto them that wait for him. — LAM. iii. 25.

**M**AN is required by his very nature as a creature, and from the dependent position in which he is placed, to take the attitude of *waiting*. For his encouragement he is assured that God "is good unto them that wait for him." Let us inquire what is involved in this duty, and consider how the Lord encourages them that perform it. If he who speaks, and they who hear, be this day waiting for him, they will assuredly find that "the Lord is good to them."

### I.

LET US INQUIRE WHAT IS IMPLIED IN WAITING  
FOR GOD.

1. *God has work for us, and we should be ready to do it.* "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." Such should be our habitual position, — that of servants waiting on the will and commands of their master;

that of soldiers ready to obey the orders of their captain: not proffering excuses or seeking to devolve the task on another, but with a willing mind saying, "Here am I, send me;" and this, whatever be the nature of the service, whether honorable or dishonorable in the world's estimation.

2. *There are blessings to bestow, and we should be waiting to receive them.* Gifts have been promised, and we should believe the promise. God is offended with us when we doubt his word, his love, his willingness to bless us. Nothing grieves the kind Father so much as to find his children ever suspecting his goodness towards them after he has given such proofs of it, and preferring the society of strangers and the pleasures of the wicked. Rest assured that we cannot grieve the Holy Spirit more readily or deeply than by doubting whether our Heavenly Father loves us, when he has given such evidence of his compassion. We cannot please him more certainly than by going to him with such faith as we have, in the assurance that he will receive us and give us what we need.

"If a flower

Were thrown out of heaven at intervals,  
You'd soon attain to a trick of looking up."

But there are better things than flowers being thrown out of heaven, and let us be "looking up" for them. Let us not complain that the heavens are shut. The heavens were opened by him who came down from

heaven; a door has been opened, and no man can shut it. Blessings are being rained down, but our hearts are not open to receive them. The fountain is flowing; let us go out and drink of it. The manna is falling around us; let us go out and gather it. The sun is shining; let us not in sulky pride retire into the dark and damp cave of unbelief; let us go out into its light and heat, as the grass and grain and flowers and trees rejoice in it at this season, and as they do so spring and grow and take their hue of health and proper colors, and rise to their full height, and hasten to bear fruit. "Be it according to your faith." God blesses his people not according to their *worth*, but according to their *wants*; and in proportion as you feel your parchedness, and look that it may be allayed, so will be the shower that descends from these clouds which are big with mercies.

3. *In waiting for God we should wait his time.* For as to certain services which he requires and rewards which he bestows there is need that we exercise patience. There are some who allow in themselves a different temper. They are willing to work, so they think; but it is not in the way God prescribes, it is in their own way. They would *work*, they say, and would take the credit of it; and so God requires them in the mean time to *wait*, — to wait and see God himself working. They would be busy in his employment; but God would rather have them for the present suffer for his name. They

would do good to others; but God hinders them in his providence, that they may see that what they need is to get good to themselves; that, being reprov'd, and, as it were, converted a second time, like Peter (Luke xxii. 32), they may then "strengthen their brethren." Or they would be very much disposed to work in some public and conspicuous field; and God allots them an obscure and unhonored sphere. Or they would be ready to labor in the shade; but God calls them forth, to their annoyance, to toil in the heat and the glare of sunshine. Or they would be diligent in the quiet valley; and God compels them to go up to the mountain-top, where they are exposed to the storms of life, and to the gaze and reproach of men. Now in all this, be it observed, there is self-will when there should be submission to the Divine will. "*Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," is the command and rule to the Christian. Again, there are those who insist that God should give them every blessing at the moment. And when the prayed-for and expected gift is withheld they begin to doubt and complain, possibly to abandon themselves to despair or scoffing, saying, with the unbelieving king of Israel, "What should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Surely we need only a moment's calm reflection to see how unreasonable as well as unbecoming this temper is. The wonder is that we should get blessings on any terms, and not that we should be obliged to wait for them. How long will men wait for earthly blessings, still

expecting them to come! How long will the ambitious man run after earthly honors, which ever vanish as he approaches them,—as the painted cloud before the boy who pursues it, in the idea that he would get riches could he only clutch it! “Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient.” He who is conscious that he deserves nothing, and that he needs much, will feel as if God were not exacting anything unreasonable in making him wait. He who knows how much is promised, and how certainly it will be granted in proper season, will be delighted to wait.

4. Once more, *waiting for God implies desire and expectation*. We wait because we desire; we wait because we expect. We are anxious to glorify God by being employed in his service; and hence we are waiting for orders,—we are seeking opportunities of serving him. We are longing for the blessings, as you see the husbandman looking over the whole sky for the coming shower to refresh his crops, or for the signs of dry weather to enable him to gather in his grain; as you have seen the mother in her eagerness, or the father, saying less, but not less earnest, looking out for a son or daughter who has been for years in a foreign clime, but who has promised to be at home at such a time. How is every object in the dim distance examined! how is every sound listened to! and, “Why is he so long in coming? why tarry

the wheels of his chariot?" Ah, if we were longing for spiritual blessings in this spirit they would come, assuredly come; and our faith would insure them, and our eagerness would hasten them: for "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Let us lay the blame on the proper parties, and not charge God with unfaithfulness. Let us rebuke our "evil heart of unbelief." "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." Ye ask slothfully, not caring whether ye receive or not; ye ask hypocritically, not willing to receive. Suppose I had this day a commission from Heaven to proclaim that the millennium is now come, — that I see in the clouds the brightness of His rising to establish on our earth the reign of peace and love and holiness, so long promised. Think ye that this would be glad tidings of great joy to all men? "What," says the worldly man, "am I to let go my grasp of these earthly objects, and henceforth seek for my satisfaction in things that are spiritual and divine?" "What," says the man of pleasure, "am I to abandon these enjoyments, without which I would feel life to be a dulness and a burden, and now and forever set my heart on the beauty of Christ and the beauty of holiness?" "What," says the ambitious man, "am I to stop short in my ascent of the hill of honor, when I am about to reach its summit and enjoy the rest and the prospect for which I have been toiling all my life?" Ah, there are persons praying, "Thy kingdom come," who do not wish Christ's kingdom

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to come. I have no special authority from Heaven to fix the day and the hour of that glorious evening in the world's history when the light is to shine with a greater glow than ever it has done in the dark and troubled day. But I have a commission to proclaim: God's reign in your hearts is pressed upon you. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." But you say you can do nothing without grace; you are waiting for it. Ah, there is reason to fear that to all thy other sins thou art adding the sin of hypocrisy. Thou art not waiting for grace, but in thy secret heart for something very different. Determined to cherish thy self-righteousness, thou art waiting for self-indulgence, waiting for earthly goods and pleasures. God does offer thee grace, but thou wishest to remain graceless. Thou mightest be made humble, but thou art determined to continue proud. Thou mightest have thy self-righteous spirit subdued, and thou art resolved to lean on thine own deeds. Thou mightest have thy selfishness eradicated, but thou art resolute in pur-

suing thine own immediate worldly interests. Thou mightest become holy, but thou art bent on abiding unholy. Friend, I would strip thee of these false pretexts by which thou art deceiving thyself, but by which thou canst not deceive God. Away with this delusion that thou hast been "waiting for God," when thou hast been waiting for self-seeking ends. Let there be a surrender at once of this thy self-will. Commit thyself at once and implicitly into God's hands. If thou "knewest the gift of God," and how good he is to them that "wait for him," thou wouldst even now submit thyself to him, to do with thee as seemeth him good; to bend thee as thou requirest to be bent, to change thee as thou requirest to be changed, and to fashion thee anew after his own pleasure. And say not that thou art waiting for the movement of the Spirit, as the impotent man waited at the pool for the troubling of the waters. For the spiritually impotent are cured, not by any wished-for movement of their spirits, but by Christ himself as he passes by; and he is now passing by, and is ready to heal.

## II.

LET US CONSIDER HOW THE LORD ENCOURAGES  
THEM THAT WAIT FOR HIM.

1. *It is a good thing in itself thus to wait when God so requires it.* But why is the blessing so long in coming? "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" These

are questions which in our "infirmity" (Psalm lxxvii. 10) we are ever tempted to put. As we put them, the answer may very possibly be, It is so long in coming just because you are so impatient about it. God cannot send it so long as you are in so unfit a state to receive it. Christ cannot do mighty works in you, or by you, "because of your unbelief." Not till these winds of temper and passion have subsided, will the softening showers descend. When you have learned to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him," the blessing may come sooner than your hopes, and it may be larger than your expectations. Meanwhile, this impatience is fretting and chafing, is irritating and distracting the soul; is rendering the time you have to wait long in itself, and much longer in your feeling of it; and possibly incapacitating you for taking the steps necessary to secure the desired end. How much more becoming and satisfying the opposite temper, — the spirit of meekness and of patience; which shortens the time by the faith and confidence cherished; which anticipates and hastens the blessing, and is thus gratified, first by the prospect, and then by the reality, — thus securing both the pleasures of hope and the pleasures of enjoyment; while it braces and invigorates the soul, and enables it to use the means to procure the expected benefit! "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall

run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

2. *It is good to wait, inasmuch as in waiting we receive many valuable lessons.* A pupil or apprentice puts himself under a master, who promises to teach him a certain branch of knowledge. Now, it is possible that, in fulfilment of his engagement, the master may just set the learner to work, and point out service after service for him. Would the scholar be thereby justified in charging his master with a breach of promise, and saying to him, "You promised to give me instruction and skill, and you set me instead to work and toil"? We see at once that if such a spirit were cherished by the pupil, it would indicate not only that he is ignorant of the branch of knowledge he wishes to learn, but that he is laboring under a more deplorable ignorance,—that he is ignorant of his own ignorance; for it is in the very act of waiting on that master, and doing the work which he prescribes, that he is to attain the skill he is seeking. It is the same in the school of Christ. It is in the very act of waiting on the Great Teacher that disciples attain those holy sentiments and habits which constitute the spiritual good they are in search of. It is in the very work that they are strengthened and acquire spiritual health, and a meetness for enjoying the wages, which thus come to be as pleasant as a reward after exertion, as rest is after labor.

No doubt the children of Israel, as they sang praises to God by the shores of the Red Sea, when

they saw their oppressors sink like lead in the waters, were expecting to be forthwith carried into the promised land in triumph. But they were not then fit for immediate entrance into their "rest;" and so God kept them there for a time in the desert, and showed them wonders which they would never otherwise have witnessed,—the manna lying every morning on the bare face of the wilderness; the water which the dry rock had yielded flowing on, unexhaled by the scorching beams of the sun, and undrunk by the thirsty sands; and the pillar of cloud shading them by day, and ever kindled into a pillar of fire by night. It was in beholding these miracles, and in the pure heaven-sent air of the desert, that they were purified from the ignorance and defilement of Egypt: and by the very time they had to wait, they were the better fitted for the sphere they were to occupy. Again, when the disciples attached themselves to the cause of Christ, they had a vague idea that there was to be the sudden appearance of a kingdom of glory. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" was the question which, under various forms, they were ever putting. "The kingdom of God is within you," was the answer given. It was in the very work of waiting on Christ's person, and engaging in his service, that they were to be ripened for the higher work before them, on earth and in heaven. What blessed privileges did they then enjoy,—privileges, it may

be, not sufficiently valued at the time, but on which they afterwards looked back with gratitude, saying, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?" Were they not blessed in hearing his discourses? Were they not honored in seeing the wonders which he performed? Were they not trained to good, as they obeyed his commandments? These gracious communings with them, these faithful reproofs, were the April sunshine and showers which watered the seed of the Word within them. Now, such, brethren, is the blessedness of all who wait upon the Lord. In conducting them into the promised inheritance, he takes them out into the wilderness, and speaks comfortably unto them, and shows them his love, and the miracles of his grace, in supporting the spiritual life within, while all around is so waste and desert. In this their training and discipleship they are made to wait upon him, and receive instruction from day to day, — "line upon line, precept upon precept."

It thus appears that God is good to all who wait upon him, *while* they wait upon him. We serve a liberal master, who not only gives us wages at the close of our work, but food and raiment and many comforts while we work. We are not required to spend our days as those of the hireling, who is ever inquiring, "When will my task be over, that I may receive my hire?" Like the ox treading out the corn in ancient Israel, which his master was not allowed to muzzle, we eat our-

selves, while we labor in God's service, of the "corn" which maketh "men cheerful." They who are in Christ's vineyard do all sing while they work, and their shouting is like the shouting of the vintage. Being "filled with the Spirit," they "speak to themselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Perhaps there is none of us who has not felt at times the irksomeness of waiting. We would like to reap the harvest without the labor of the seed-time. But it is otherwise ruled in God's house, where it is ordained that "if any would not work, neither should he eat;" and it is for our good that it should be so; for the labor is as essential to our health as the food we earn by it. Man had to work even in his unfallen state; and since the fall he must eat bread in "the sweat of his face;" and this appointment, which is a curse through the first man, is turned into a blessing by the Second. We would like to have the prize without the competition: and the prize of our "high calling" will not be withheld; but the training we have to undergo in order to attain it may be as valuable as the crown that is awarded.

There are times when we wonder that God does not convert the world at once. We are disappointed when missionaries have to wait for years

before they see conversions; and because, after fifty years of missionary ploughing, we are made to feel that we have only touched here and there the surface of the wide field. And it is not for us to profess to be able to sound all the depths of the Divine counsels; but it is *ours* to gather the lessons which are thus read to the church. Why is not the whole world already converted by the exertions which the church has made? The answer to *us* is, that the church may have a field to labor in; that it may do more than it has ever yet done; that it may train the young and its members generally to more thorough habits of giving and self-sacrifice; that it may send out its noblest and bravest youths into the mission-field; and that it may be made to feel its need of the blessing, and be led to depend upon it. You wonder that so little has been accomplished when so much work has been done. But the proper wonder is, that so little work has been done; that for nearly a thousand years there was scarcely any missionary exertion in the church; that even the Protestant Church for two centuries and a half did little or nothing for the heathen; and that it is only a little more than half a century since the church awoke to a sense of its duty, and that even now it has not realized anything like its full responsibility. The true wonder is, that God has encouraged us so much; that he has raised up so many faithful missionaries; that he has opened a way for us in

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countries which seemed to be closed; that he has removed prejudices and shaken old superstitions; that around stations and circuits he has enabled us to gather tens of thousands of converts, not to speak of many who are now rejoicing before the throne on high.

3. Once more, *the blessing is larger because we have waited for it.* Why is it that man, when he has an arduous work to do, must do it when he can, and hasten to perform it? How is it that when he makes a promise he must be ready to execute it when he can, and not wait till, as he supposes, some more favorable opportunity may present itself? Plainly because his power is limited, because his time on the earth is uncertain, and if he let one opportunity slip, another may never present itself. But no such weakness is laid on the High and Holy One who "inhabith eternity," and with whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The time can never come when it is impossible for him to complete his designs. He needs no assistance from other beings for the accomplishment of his purposes, that he should act when others concur with him. Nothing can fall out unexpected by him to whom all things are known from the beginning, that he should change his plans and suit them to circumstances. No coming opposition can thwart or stay for one instant the progress of those plans which have been designed in eternity, that

he should fulfil them before the time. He can allow opportunity after opportunity to pass away, till at last the "fit time," "the set time," "the fulness of times," comes.

Why is it that the sailor, when he sees the coming storm, must be all bustle and activity? Why, for instance, in that vessel which carried the Apostle of the Gentiles to Rome, had they to resort to so many expedients,—to undergird the ship, and cast out the anchor, and strike the sail, and cast out the wheat, and lighten the ship; and why at length had they to escape, "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship"? Why all this anxiety and dismay? Plainly because they felt themselves driven on Adria by elements over which they had no control; by winds which would not cease their ravings at their command; by waves which rolled in spite of their entreaties: because they feared those yawning gulfs which were ready to swallow them up, and those rocks which would have stood unmoved while they dashed their frail bark into a thousand pieces. Contrast this fear, this conscious weakness, with the calm and serene power of Jesus when on the Lake of Galilee, and you will at once see the superiority of Omnipotence. The tempest was loud, as in the other case, and the ship was covered with the waves, and the disciples were in great alarm: and Jesus was asleep; but he arose as a master, and "rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm." Such is the might, such the wisdom, such the tranquillity of

He can allow the floods to rise, and exert their force, and spend their strength; but the instant he says, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," the waters must begin to recede. Amid all the storms which agitate our sky, he who flies "upon the wings of the wind," and rides "upon a cherub," is still at the head of all the powers of the universe, leading them to fulfil his wise purposes. And this is the reason why his plans move along in such magnificent order, with such dignity and majestic ease. In his works there is none of the imperfection which arises from haste, none of the confusion which arises from anxiety. All is order and beneficence amidst so much complexity and seeming irregularity. Everything is happening at its most appropriate time, amid so much apparent delay and procrastination. While nothing lingers beyond its time, nothing hastens to a premature conclusion. And this is the reason why his plans are marked by infinite wisdom; why they are at last so beneficial. While man must act when he can, the Almighty waits till it is most advantageous. God delays the blessing only that it may be larger when it comes. His counsels ripen slowly, that the ear may be fuller, that the fruit may be richer and mellower. How is it that the river, which rose in so small a fountain among the rugged hills, now sweeps along so magnificently among fertile plains? It is because in its lengthened and circuitous course it has gathered contributions on either side,

receiving a new stream from every valley which it passed. Thus it is that the stream of God's bounty is made to turn and wind, only that it may receive contributions from every quarter as it sweeps along, and flow at length more largely into the bosom. Hence it is that the royal munificence of his bounty knows no limits at last. Thus it is that he is good to them that *wait* for him. His blessings come not in scanty proportions, and according to the mere letter of the promise, but in flowing streams which far exceed the most ardent expectations of his creatures. He does "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

## THE LESSONS DERIVED FROM THE PLANT.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? — MATT. vi. 30.

THE inspired writers are in the way of employing all the objects in Nature with which we are familiar, in order to illustrate spiritual truths. Solomon sends the slothful man to the ant: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard." Isaiah makes the ox and ass rebuke the ingratitude of the professing people of God: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." A greater than Solomon and all the prophets sends those who distrust God's providence to the lilies of the field and the fowls of heaven: "Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

All this exercised a most beneficent influence on pious men in ancient Israel. Living as they did, much in the open air, and in perpetual view of the wondrous works of God in earth and sky, Nature was

seen by them to be full of God. The grass sprang, the flowers bloomed, the wheat and barley yielded their increase, and the vine and the fig and the olive-trees their rich fruit, all in obedience to God's command; and as they did so they showed forth the glory of God as well as furnished nourishment to his creatures. Would that the example set by Hebrew shepherds and husbandmen as they tended their flocks or pruned their vineyards would induce those who live much among the works of Nature to take like elevated views. The works of Nature would afford a higher and nobler pleasure when thus connected with God and divine things than when associated merely with professional and earthly solicitudes. Would, too, that it might lead those who delight to study the operations of Nature, or who go forth from our cities at such seasons of the year as this to walk among the scenes of the country, to take a higher view than they do who look to mere mechanical laws, and make them regard all natural objects as really works of God, and capable of imparting spiritual instruction. There is not an object in the natural, the vegetable, or animal kingdom, which is not capable of being thus enlisted into the service of Christ.

The plant in particular has been much employed by the inspired writers to convey spiritual lessons. The life of the plant seemed to them like the spiritual life in the soul; the rain and dew that nourished it reminded them of the grace which comes down

from Heaven; the flowers which adorned it taught them that the soul should be adorned with heavenly graces; and the fruit which it yielded admonished them that they too must bring forth fruit unto God. The lesson of this day is drawn from the plant. Christ himself is the teacher, and the grasses and lilies are the lesson-book. The greatest of all teachers is employing his works as symbols, figures, or models to instruct us in heavenly truth. Let us attend while he speaks. Four topics will open to us as we advance.

I.

WE ARE TO CONSIDER THE WORKS OF GOD, AND IN PARTICULAR THE PLANTS, THE LILIES, AND THE GRASS OF THE FIELD.

"Consider," says he, "the lilies of the field." There are many who do not consider them. Some of these persons are fond of seeing or possessing fine specimens of human workmanship in dress or furniture or houses or paintings, but they "regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands." "And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." We are to mark them; we are to mark how they grow. We need no scientific knowledge, no learned terms, to enable us to do this. All persons who have eyes to see may see it with or without book learning, whether they have or have not been at schools or colleges. They may in particular observe two things.

1. Every part of the plant is made *to serve an end*. "They toil not, neither do they spin;" yet every organ of the plant has its use. Look at the swelling tree that overshadows us, or at this graceful lily at our feet. Consider it. It has roots which serve a purpose. These roots penetrate into the soil and draw nourishment from it. These spread out downwards as the trunk and branches mount upwards, and enable the tree, the oak for example, to stand the storms of a hundred winters. The form of the bole of a tree, and the manner in which it fixes itself in the ground, is said to have yielded some suggestions to a celebrated engineer in the construction of a famous light-house (Eddyston). You may remark how the tree springs up from the ground as a stem or trunk, on which hang all the branches and flowers and seed and fruit. This trunk, as it mounts upwards, spreads out all around into the air as branches and branchlets. These are covered with leaves rejoicing in the sunshine, and the moisture of dew and rain, and drawing in nourishment from the atmosphere. Upon these, at the proper season, you may look for and find flowers to delight the eye, and seed wherewith to propagate other plants after their kind, and fruit for the sustenance of God's creatures. It is obvious to every reflecting mind that in this Divine workmanship every part has its use and its end. The architect of a famous palace (Sydenham) confesses that he derived some of the ideas embodied in that structure from observing the wonderful pro-

vision made for bearing up the very broad leaf of one of the most beautiful of lilies. But there is another principle to be observed in the plant.

2. There is visible in the plant *an order, an ornament, a beauty*. Special reference is made to this by him who made them (for by him were the worlds created), and who now uses them to teach us lessons. God is said not only to have made, but to have *clothed* the grass of the field. While every part of the plant has its use, it has also a clothing; it is clothed with beauty to minister to our delight and manifest the Divine glory. So far as we know, the plant could have fulfilled all its other and ordinary functions without having such an elegance of form or garniture of coloring. "I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." It can be shown that every plant and every organ of the plant is, as it were, constructed upon a model or pattern in the Divine mind. Look at the full-formed tree growing apart from all other trees, and you see at once that it is made to grow up into a particular form, and this form is beautiful to look upon. It can be shown that every tree takes its own peculiar form, — a form after its kind; and if not interfered with, that form is lovely. Look, too, at the flower of the lily, or any other plant, and in every part of it—its stalk, its petals, and inner organs, in their forms, and in the way in which they are placed—there are obvious order and ornament to call forth our admiration and our praise.

Then, what richness of coloring in the flower. First of all, every color is beautiful in itself; and then, colors which are accordant are placed alongside of one another in pleasing melody or exciting harmony. It needs science to explain all this, to show how it arises, and point out the causes of it; but it needs no science to enable us to observe it or enjoy it: the eye perceives it spontaneously, and drinks in the beauty, and it needs only piety to enable us to turn all this into an anthem of praise. This *clothing* of the plant meets us everywhere. Take the commonest plant, — the furze that grows on the common, the seaweed that cleaves to the rocks washed by the ocean, or the fern that springs up in the mountain glen, — and you may observe in its structure, in its leaves, and all its pendicles, a wonderful correspondence of side to side, and a counterbalancing of one part by another. Let the eye travel over Nature, as we walk among the cultivated fields, or on the grassy slopes and valleys of our upland districts, or among the thick woods where the winds have sown the seeds, and bush and tree of every kind spring up, each eager to maintain its place and show its separate form and beauty, and we discover an order and a grace in every branch and blade and leaf and color. Pluck the leaf and flower and consider it, and observe how one edge has the same number of notches in it as the other edge, and what nice balancings and counterpoises there are, and how nicely the lines and dots and shadings suit one another, and recur each at its proper

place, as if all had been done by the most exact measurement and under the most skilful and tasteful eye. Enter the rich arbor or the cultivated garden, and observe how the flowers have been enlarged or improved by the care which has been taken of them; and in this gayer color and in that fuller expanse and more flowing drapery and richer fragrance mark how God, who rewards us for opening our eyes and looking abroad upon his works, holds out a still greater reward to those who in love to him, or in love to them, take pains with them and bestow labor upon them.

Now, all this fitness and all this order and beauty testify of the wisdom and goodness of God. All these objects point upward to their God and to our God. Every flower that expands itself to the sun, every branch, every blade of grass, and every leaf that throws out its points to the air and sky, should raise these earthward looks of ours and carry up our thoughts to the place where God dwelleth, and where we hope to dwell forever. As our eyes were given us to behold these beauties, so our hearts were given us to cherish admiration, adoration, and gratitude, and our voices to praise him who made them all. But these works of God can also serve other religious ends. They may be used as lesson-books; they are thus used by Christ to instruct us in great spiritual truths. Nature may thus be sanctified, and be made to teach us the very same lessons as the inspired Word.

## II.

SECONDLY, WE ARE TO CONSIDER THE GROUNDS WHICH WE HAVE FOR TRUSTING IN GOD THAT HE WILL PROVIDE FOR OUR TEMPORAL WANTS.

“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, much more shall he clothe you.”

This is a specimen of Bible reasoning. The Bible speaks as “unto wise men,” and calls on us to “judge” what “it says.” Its reasonings are all brief, all very conclusive, but at the same time easily followed. Here in this Word are no long and circuitous trains of discussion, difficult to pursue, and in which sophistry may lurk. All here is simple and transparent. A child may understand it, a savage may grasp it. It sets forth a simple truth, and then draws immediately the proper conclusion. Take, as an example, “If God spared not his own Son, but gave him freely to the death for us,”—here is the premise, and the inference follows,—“how will he not with him also freely give us all things?” Of the same character is the argument in the text. Preaching as he was, on the mountain, he points to the fowls of the air which may at the time have been fluttering around him, and to the lilies which may have been growing at his feet; and if, he says, God so cares for the fowls, will he not provide food and sustenance for the children of men; if he so clothe the grass of the fields, will he not much more pro-

vide clothing for those who have immortal souls made at first in his own image? "If God," he says, "so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven."

There is an allusion here to the manner in which the Jews heated their ovens. These ovens were made by excavating a hole in the earth and paving the bottom with stones; they were, as a traveller tells us, "heated by putting wood or dry grass into the oven, and when heated, the ashes were removed and the bread was placed on the heated stones." Such was the use to which the grass was often, and legitimately enough, put. The grass is seen growing to-day, clothed in beauty, and to-morrow it is burning in the oven; yet God, knowing all the while the use to which the plant might be turned, did thus beautify and adorn it. It is a proof and illustration of the watchful care which God takes of all his works. The works which are the most perishing, those which we might regard as the meanest and most insignificant, those which we trample under our feet and destroy, — even these have had infinite pains bestowed on them. God does nothing in a careless or negligent manner; everything which comes from God is worthy of him; we see that it is God's workmanship. The argument is irresistible. The lesson comes home at once to us. Every bird we hear carolling its song, for the very pleasure of it, on the tree or in the air; every flower that we see expanding its petals in the fields or garden, is rebuking our want of faith and confidence in

God, and, as it were, saying, "If God take such care of me, will he not much more take care of you?"

"Ye are of more value than many sparrows," of more value than all the grass of the field. Ye have a body that is fearfully and wonderfully made, made with even a more amazing skill than the lilies of the field. The lilies are arrayed in greater splendor than Solomon ever was; and Solomon's body and every man's frame is more wondrously made than the loveliest plant that ever adorned meadow or mountain. Surely the God who made that goodly frame will also feed and clothe it. Then, that body is but a casket formed to contain an infinitely more precious jewel. That body is the tenement within which an immortal tenant dwells; and God will preserve that tabernacle, if for no other reason, yet for this, that within it the soul dwells. Then, that soul was formed at first in the image of God, in order to accomplish a high destiny, and when renewed by the Spirit of God it will fulfil that end. And ye, the disciples of Christ, ye have been redeemed at a great price; not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. There is a sense in which man cannot think too lowly of himself; there is a sense in which he is lower than the sparrow,—lower than the grass cast into the oven. That sparrow has not sinned against its Maker, that grass has not fallen short of the glory of God; both have fulfilled the end of their existence. But it cannot be so said of you or of me. In this sense man cannot think

too lowly of himself, or be too much impressed with his sinfulness and vileness. But in another sense he cannot think too highly of himself. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," and ye cannot think too highly of the worth of that soul which was formed at first in the likeness of God,—of that soul for which Christ died. In this sense man is not at liberty to think meanly of himself, as if he were no better than a plant or a beast. He is of more value than all the beasts or plants of the earth, of more value than the sun and moon and all the stars of heaven; for when all living beings have died and the heavenly bodies have been changed as a garment thrown aside when it has fulfilled its purpose, this soul shall be in its youth, its infancy still, with an eternity before it. This soul is reckoned of such value by the Son of God, that rather than it should perish he left the bosom and the glory of the Father in heaven and came to this earth to suffer ignominy, sorrow, and death. Rest assured, O ye of little faith, that if God so clothe the grass of the field, whose beauties last but for a day, much more will he make provision for you and for your wants.

Not, my friends, that we are on this account to give up all work and exertion in the thought that God will provide for us. This would be to pervert and abuse the text. True, the fowls of the air sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; still, even they, according as God hath taught them by the instincts which he hath planted within them, are

at pains to secure their food. "That which thou givest them they gather." True, the lilies of the field toil not, neither do they spin; and yet they draw nourishment from the air and from the earth. And just as the fowls of the air are up in the morning and are active, just as the plants of the ground are busy all the sunshiny day, drawing in sustenance, so ye, too, of more value than these, are to be active in the exercise of the faculties which God has given, and diligent in your callings. The Apostle is at great pains to show that Christians, because they are Christians, are not at liberty to neglect industry, or to suppose that God would feed them without the use of means (1 Thess. iv. 11), "and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, as we commanded you." And again (2 Thess. iii. 10), "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." And what, then, it may be asked, are we warned against by our Lord in this passage?

We are, my friends, warned against a spirit of unbelief; we are exhorted to cherish a spirit of confidence. Christ would deliver us from a spirit of saivety. The fowls of the air gather their food, but

they have no feeling of anxiety while they do so. The lilies of the field draw nourishment from the soil and the air, but meanwhile they are not oppressed with fears as to the future. Much more should you, were it not that your faith is so little, put confidence in God.

But oh, how many are there who are bowed down all the day because of a burden of care lying on them! "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" These are the anxious questions that are ever pressing upon them and craving for an answer. And because of them there are many who cannot enjoy the bounties which God has bestowed, for they are always afraid that they may be taken from them. It is sunshine at present, but may not the clouds return after the rain and descend in storm and tempest? And what is to be the issue of all this? Am I to have health or distress; prosperity or adversity; a lengthened life or a speedy death? Now, a believer in Christ has a means of allaying all these apprehensions. He can say, I leave all these things with my God. My concern is this: in whatever state I am, therewith to be content; but what my state may be or should be, that is not my concern, but God's. My anxiety should be simply to be in the path of duty; but as to what should befall me in that path, I leave this with my God. It is thus that the believer lays his burden on him who is able to bear it; he leaves the issue with him to whom the issues belong, and finds how comfortable it is to

obey the command: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

### III.

THIRDLY, WE ARE TO CONSIDER THAT IF GOD SO CLOTHE THE GRASS OF THE FIELD, THAT IF HE SO CLOTHE THE BODIES OF HIS PEOPLE, MUCH MORE WILL HE CLOTHE THEIR SOULS.

This is not the direct lesson taught in the text, but it arises very directly out of it. The argument is, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which is of comparatively little value, much more will he provide clothing for his people, who are of more value. But the argument needs only to be carried out a step farther to take this form. If God does thus clothe the bodies of his people, much more will he clothe their souls with heavenly graces.

And ah, these souls of ours need to be clothed! The plant once of a graceful form and clothed with the richest hues, but now bent, broken by the wind, bemired in the dust,—this is the emblem of the soul, once in the very image of God, and arrayed with a brighter glory than the lily, but now fallen from its first estate, broken and torn and polluted by sin! The body, lately in the vigor and bloom of health, but now maimed, diseased,—that is the emblem of the soul once holy and righteous, but now lying under the judgments of Heaven and blotted with foul lusts.

Ah, how like is that soul to the grass which has been cut down and which is about to be cast into the oven ! That soul has been cut off from its God, the source of all spiritual life ; already has the life ceased to circulate in it, and it is ready to be cast into the fire that is not quenched. Can it indeed be that this soul is to grow and to flourish once more upon its stalk ? Can it be that this soul, already in the grasp of death, is to walk forth in newness of life ? "Son of man, can these bones live ? O Lord, thou knowest." Ah, yes, God knew it from the beginning ; and, blessed be God, he has revealed it to us. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me is thine help." So great value did he set on these souls, that he sent his Son from heaven to save them from everlasting death.

Christ's work when on earth was a work of salvation. They brought to him the sick, the maimed, and the blind, and he healed them all. If you had accompanied Christ on some of his pilgrimages when on earth, what a glorious sight would you have seen, — not, indeed, such a sight as this world admires when it applauds the warrior with strong and healthy men before him whom it is his pride and glory to cut down and destroy. You would, if you had followed Christ, have seen a far different but a far more glorious sight. You would have seen before him, on the way by which he was to pass, the road covered with couches with the sick laid out upon them ; and you would have seen the dumb, when they could not speak, striving to give expression to their woes by

their earnest struggles; and you would have heard the blind, when they could not see him, crying to be taken to him. This was the scene before him; and behind him, after he had passed, were the sick bearing their couches, and the lame leaping like the harts, and the dumb singing his praises, and the blind gazing earnestly upon him with joyful eyes, and the lunatics in their right minds, and those lately dead in the embraces of their friends. Yes, these were the fruits that followed Christ's visits wherever he went. And he is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His office, his prerogative, is still to seek and to save that which is lost. He is in this world now by his spirit, as he once was by his bodily presence. He is not to be discerned by any pomp or external splendor. The kingdom of God cometh not by observation; but still ye may discern him by the eye of faith. Before him are persons afflicted with all manner of soul maladies, some under the power of wild passion by which they are led captive at pleasure, some covered all over with the leprosy of vice, all of them blind to the perception of spiritual beauty and deaf to the voice of God addressed to them. Wherever Christ goes, the way is strewn with such; and wherever he goes, he leaves behind him traces of his presence. Before him, as he marches through our world, are the blind, the deaf, the dying, and the dead; and behind him are the seeing, the hearing, the living, the lovely, and the loving. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to

preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Not only is the soul once dead made alive in this work,—it is beautified and adorned. "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." Shall not he who so clothes the grass of the field also clothe you, O ye of little faith? And the garment with which the Father clothes his beloved child, to the envy and spite of his brethren, is a party-colored one. Yes, if you have faith but as a grain of mustard-seed, you will, by the vital power which is imparted, be clothed with graces of many a hue, each lovely in itself, and lovely in the place which it has to occupy: there will be the brighter colors, the blue, the pink, and the orange of faith and confidence and hope, mingling with the darker but not less lovely colors,—with the red, the purple, and the olive of penitence, humility, and patience; and the whole lightened and brightened by what is, after all, the pure beam of Heaven, by the pure white light of love, coming direct and unbroken from him who is light and love.

Yes, brethren, our souls need to be beautified. They need not only to be renewed, they need to be adorned. There are some Christian men and women who are under the influence of true faith and steady principle, but they are not amiable. They are cross or peevish or violent or stubborn. Such persons need to be clothed, that they become not only good but lovely, — as the lily is lovely. Brethren, watch and pray, live and labor, that ye may be thus lovely. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting of the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

My friends, this world of ours is but a nursery, a place of nurture, where we are to be reared and then transplanted, — transplanted into the paradise above. These flowers around us have their beauty but for a day; but it is different with the souls which are being adorned by the spirit of God. They are to bloom forever in a better land, where are no winds to blight, no storms to destroy. Brethren, we have seen that all plants of the earth are formed after a model. It is the same with the spiritual plants of our Heavenly Father's planting. They are all formed after the model of him who is expressively called the "plant of renown." Each branch, each leaf of this Tree of Life is an image of the entire tree. It is thus that we are to grow in likeness to him, till we can say

and sing: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth."

## GROWTH IN GRACE ILLUSTRATED IN THE LIFE OF NICODEMUS.

"There came also Nicodemus which at the first came to Jesus by night" (John xix. 39), as compared with, "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night" (John iii. 1, 2). Nicodemus saith unto them (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth? — JOHN vii. 50, 51.

**A**MONG other and higher excellences by which the four Evangelists are characterized, every thinking mind is much interested to notice the variety of character, good and evil, brought before us. In the centre or foreground of the painting (if painting it can be called which is the simplest of all simple narratives) stands Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, only seen in shadow, — working miracles, relieving distress, and teaching his disciples, under the pressure all the while of the mighty load of a world's sin. Around we see the apostles distinguished by almost every possible diversity of character, some timid, others confident, each with a heart ungodly by nature, but all with one sad exception coming under Divine

Power, which is struggling with remaining corruption within them. Farther on we get a glimpse of other disciples shrinking from the view; for though convinced that Jesus has come from God, they have not the courage to avow themselves to be his followers. Here and there among the groups that hover around we notice enemies irritated by the faithfulness of the Holy One in the midst of them, and anxiously plotting to be rid of him. At this place we observe a company of scoffing Sadducees, at this other a band of scowling Pharisees. Scattered among these we meet with persons who had been relieved by the love of him who went about continually doing good; who had had their burdens removed or their diseases healed. This man, fixing his eyes so eagerly on Jesus, was lately blind; this other, listening so intently, was lately deaf; this third, walking and leaping with such alacrity, was not long before hopelessly lame; while this fourth was only a few days ago prostrated on a bed of sickness, or shut up in the gloom of the sepulchre. In the background we have the mass of the people vacillating between two opinions, — now strewing his path with branches of trees and shouting "Hosanna!" and again with loud voice demanding his crucifixion.

Where else will you meet with such a variety of character, reaching from spotless excellence on the one hand to bloated lust and demoniacal fury on the other? Heaven and earth and hell, god and man and devils, the flesh and the spirit, human nature and divine grace, meet and wrestle till we discover the

several properties of each. By this mingling of light and shadow we are interested and allured to pursue the path before us, and in doing so we gather deep instruction.

I mean at this time to single out for more special contemplation a single person from the multitudes that pass before us. That individual is Nicodemus. He is presented to us in three different positions. In the passage immediately before us he is engaged with Joseph of Arimathea in committing the body of Jesus to the place of sepulture. But the Evangelist in mentioning this circumstance, so much to his credit, refers to another passage in his life not so commendable: "There came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night." On turning back to chapter vii. we read of Nicodemus giving a noble testimony in difficult circumstances in behalf of justice and of Jesus; but in that passage the same humbling clause is added, — "he that came to Jesus by night."

#### I.

"Nicodemus, who at the first came to Jesus by night." This carries us back three years in the history. At that time Jesus was just beginning his public ministry. He had come to Jerusalem for the first time since he began to preach and work miracles. His life had hitherto been obscure in Galilee; but now in the capital of the country he wrought wonders which proved that he was a teacher come from God.

From his first appearance the prejudices of the priests and rulers were armed against him. Finding the temple, which was his Father's house, profaned by unseemly merchandise, he proceeded to cleanse it by casting down the tables and removing the money-changers, as a type of the work which he came to perform in purifying the world, which ought to be his temple. From this time forward the jealous eyes of the hierarchy were fixed upon him, narrowly watching his conduct. A wound had been inflicted which continued to rankle in their breasts. Nor did their enmity cease till three years after it succeeded in bringing him to the cross and to the grave.

You can easily conceive how in these circumstances it must have required much courage on the part of one possessed of rank and authority to avow himself a follower of the new teacher. "Not many mighty, not many noble are called;" yet God in every age has had witnesses for the truth from among the higher as well as the lower grades of life. It was at this very time that Nicodemus came to Jesus. Nicodemus was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrim, the supreme council of the nation,—in short, was one of the judges and senators of the land. He belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, the most popular and influential of all the parties into which the Jews were at that time divided, and the one which felt its self-righteous spirit most deeply wounded and its power shaken by the life and teachings of Jesus. We can thus understand how great must have been the

struggle before he could come to receive instruction from the new teacher from Nazareth, the lowly Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph the carpenter.

On the one hand, prejudice must have led him to doubt whether one of so lowly an appearance could be the Messiah mentioned in such glowing language by the prophets, and expected by the people to be a temporal prince who was to sit on the throne of David, and establish a more extensive dominion than the Jewish one had been in the time of its greatest prosperity. On the other hand, reason must have told him that no man could do these miracles which Jesus did except God were with him. Pride must have suggested that by avowing himself a follower of Jesus he would be lowered in the esteem of the circle in which he moved. He felt as if he needed a teacher, and yet he was ashamed of one who came in so lowly a form. For a time there may have been a struggle in his breast like that between chaos and order at creation, when the Spirit moved on the face of the waters, like that which we have seen between light and thick masses of cloud at the dawn of the day, and no one but he who searcheth all things can tell which is to gain the mastery.

When at length the good overcame the evil, no doubt through the guiding of the Spirit of Jesus, it was accompanied by an unworthy compromise of principle. He resolved to go to Jesus, but he had not the courage to do so openly in the light of day. He was afraid that if he were but seen in

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the company of the new teacher he would lose the favorable opinion of those of his own station; and every one acquainted with human nature knows that most men would rather lose the favor of those beneath them in rank, or even of those above them, than of persons of their own circle, with whom they are in the habit of daily associating. We ought all to be ashamed of our foolish deeds; but here is one shrinking from the performance of the wisest resolution he ever formed. If he had been about to visit an earthly prince he would have chosen the light of day; but so much are men dazzled by the splendor of worldly station, and so little do they esteem spiritual excellence, that he could not come to him who was born King of the Jews except under the clouds of concealment. If heralds had announced that Tiberius, the Roman Emperor, had arrived at Jerusalem, we can conceive that Nicodemus would have selected the most public hour of the day, and the most public street, to wait upon him in the midst of bustling crowds; but now when He who was the Prince of peace, foretold by prophets for thousands of years, his birth celebrated by angels, and his power attested by miracles, and he himself the King of kings and Lord of lords, came to Jerusalem, the Jewish ruler could not visit him except in a way which showed that he was ashamed to be seen in his presence.

*But it is well when we come to Jesus at all.*  
We will be received if we have faith but as a grain

of mustard-seed. Virtue will come out of him to make us whole if we but touch the hem of his garment. If Nicodemus had come to an earthly prince at this unseasonable hour he would have been scornfully rejected; but he came to the Prince of peace, and he received a welcome. This teacher come from God did not discourage him by a single word of reproach or look of disapprobation. The greatest of all teachers proceeded to instruct him in the grand doctrine of the necessity of being born again by the Spirit of God. While the great prophet of the church taught him by his word, he also taught him by his Spirit. He came with a veil over his heart so that he could not discern as he read them the meaning of Moses and the prophets; he went away with the veil removed, and his mind enlightened to discern the truth. He came with his soul dark as the night which enveloped him, but he came to the Sun of Righteousness, to him who is the light of the world; and he went away under the light of the morning which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Now, the spirit which Nicodemus showed we find appearing in all ages, including this present time. We still see the young, the vain, the timid, coming or professing to come in much the same way,—in secret; afraid of the censure or ridicule of their associates, and apparently more ashamed of their attachment to the cross of Christ than of their follies or of their sins. They are convinced of the

claims of religion, and of the need of salvation. Conscious of their sin, they are afraid of the indignation of God, and would wish to avoid it. Under some of the disappointments of life, the loss of health, or wealth, or friends, they are made to feel that "this is not their rest, for that it is polluted," and they look round for an enduring good. But still they would not choose to be regarded by this world, or by their companions, as being deeply concerned about the salvation of their souls. They would be more ashamed of prayer, if found in the act, than if caught in some sin. They would shrink from being thought converted or seeking conversion. Among their associates they are anxious to appear as free, as unfettered, as gay and indifferent as others around them, and would scarcely dare to utter a serious sentiment for fear of the ridicule that might follow.

I am afraid as to the great body of such persons that they have never come to Christ, and that when they would come, the fear of man beats them back, as we have heard of the shipwrecked sailor being sucked back by the recoiling wave after he had reached the shore and thought he was safe. They have often resolved to come to Christ, but have never, like Nicodemus, actually come to him. As to others, however, whose conduct is thus wavering, we may believe that their faith, though weak, is genuine and sincere. Like Nicodemus, they have come to Christ; but like him under the

clouds of night. Unseen by the world they have had a meeting with Christ. When no human eye noticed them they have had a whole night's wrestling with him, as Jacob had with the angel of the covenant, and they wrestled till the breaking of the day, till the day-star arose in their hearts. The world did not know it; but the tears of conviction and of penitence rolled from their eyes, and they came timidly in the darkness to express their faith in Christ. They felt themselves drawn against their very nature towards God as by the cords of love and the bands of a man. Their desires were so weak, and their motives so imperfect, that Christ might have refused them; but he encouraged them, and instead of crushing he proceeded to bind up the broken reed. In very truth Christ appeared to them in the visions of that night as he did to Jacob at Bethel. While they drew nigh to him he drew nigh to them. A ladder was set up on earth which reached to heaven, and down it the grace of God descended into their hearts, and up it their faith and affections did climb to heaven above. Surely the Lord was in that place, though they did not expect it. Though he might have rejected them, Jesus did truly receive them, and instructed them experimentally in the doctrine of regeneration; and the Spirit who bloweth where he listeth breathed into them the breath of spiritual life, and they were born again while they were wondering at this mysterious communication. I invite such,

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and I invite all, to follow Nicodemus into the second scene in which he is presented to us.

## II.

Upwards of two years have elapsed without our hearing of the Jewish ruler. We do not read how he passed this time, or whether he had any further communication with the great teacher who had instructed him in the doctrine of regeneration. After the feast he may have returned to his own home. Shortly after this interview we know that Jesus retired to Galilee, his usual place of abode, or rather of his wanderings, and so their further meetings could not have been frequent. But when Jesus came up as he did to the great religious festivals, we can conceive that Nicodemus would wait on his ministry and seek opportunities of meeting with him. This is certain, that he would often meet with God in spiritual communion; and the teacher who had come from God, and taught him the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, would help him in his aspirations. We can picture him in his own home searching the Scriptures to see if this was not the very Christ foretold by the prophets. The Spirit which at the first converted is now sanctifying him. As he was born of the spirit, so is he now living in the spirit and walking in the spirit.

We find him next presented to us in his place in the Jewish Sanhedrim. Jesus had come to Jerusalem

at the feast of tabernacles, and his presence had been hailed by the multitudes who crowded around him eagerly listening to the words of grace and salvation which flowed from his lips. A number of the people believed on him and avowed their convictions. Their feelings were too loudly expressed not to reach the ears of the Pharisees and priests who felt as if their dominion were tottering beneath them. Stung by malice and jealousy, they called a meeting of the great council of the nation to determine what should be done in the extraordinary circumstances in which they were placed. It was resolved to send out officers to apprehend Jesus and bring him before their tribunal. When the officers drew near, they found him in the midst of the people inviting them in the most encouraging manner to partake of the mercy brought nigh to them: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Before seizing their intended prisoner the officers were induced to listen, and as they did so they found themselves interested in the discourse; their attention became more and more riveted; they caught the feeling of adoration which heaved in every breast; they hesitated and delayed carrying their design into execution, and when Jesus finished his discourse they were so awed that they became completely powerless; they allowed him to pass away undisturbed, and at the risk of being severely punished they came back to those who had sent them out, with this signal testimony, "Never man spake like this man." The council had sat in stern and sullen impatience waiting

the return of their servants; and on hearing this unexpected answer their passion could be restrained within no bounds. Here were their own dependents failing them at this critical moment. "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who know not the law are cursed." It is as if they said, "This is a popular delusion; only the lowest and most ignorant of the people have been deceived by him: none of the learned have thought for one instant of espousing his cause. Can you point to a single man of influence who regards him with a friendly eye? No; it is impossible, and cursed must that people be who are thus liable to be deluded."

It is a trying time to Nicodemus as he sits there in the council, — a time fitted to search him, and to show to himself and others the innermost springs and motives of his nature. He sees the temper of his brother councillors exasperated to the utmost. Not a voice in the assembly is lifted in behalf of justice. Does he seek now to conceal his faith in Jesus, as he had done on a former occasion? No; though he should stand alone, like a breakwater in the midst of the waves, he feels himself called on to speak out even if he should thus be bringing down upon him the ire of all his associates. He sees that the council is about to proceed to violent measures; and in language which shows how calm he is in the midst of the storm he puts the simple question, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"

The angry feeling which had been burning against Jesus and the officers is now directed full against Nicodemus. Suspicion is awakened in every breast, and they charge him with being a follower of the Galilean teacher.

But there is a dignity and a majesty in justice which awes when it fails to convince. The Sanhedrim were overpowered by the question put to them, and they separated each to his own house in all the sulkeness of disappointed revenge, breathing out imprecations against Jesus and the friend whom they now discovered that they had in their own body.

In the conduct of Nicodemus on this occasion we discover courage and faithfulness of a high order. It was a testing time, and Nicodemus stood it. He said enough, and he said no more. He could not have said less in justice, and perhaps he was not required to say more in prudence. It is evident that during these two years which have elapsed since first we met with him he has made decided progress in the Christian life. He who at the first could come to Jesus only by night, now stands by him in open day and in the face of the most formidable opposition, before which the courage of the strongest might have quailed. "Add to your faith virtue," the old Roman courage, a noble quality when used in defence of a good cause. Christ has a kingdom and a cause in this world which he requires his followers to defend. We live in a world in which there is evil opposing the good. We condemn the wickedness of the Jews, as well

we may, at the time when Christ came to his own and his own received him not. But I believe that human nature is much the same in all ages; and that if Jesus had fixed on our age and nation as that in which to come to our earth, wicked hands would have persecuted and slain him just as the Jews did. We need still to defend his cause against the open and insidious attacks of his enemies. How pleasant to observe Christians growing, as Nicodemus, in zeal and devotedness to their Master! They may have been frightened by the danger when they saw it at a distance; but when they are face to face with it their courage rises with the occasion. How pleasant to find a youth at first timid, now facing the foe; at first like the sapling bending before every breath of wind, but now like the full-grown oak firm and upright amid the fiercest storms! When the youthful David left his sheep-cots to visit the army, it was to carry a message of peace to his brothers, and not to fight. But when he heard Goliath defying the army of the living God, his whole soul was stirred within him, and taking courage when he remembered how he had slain the lion and the bear which had attacked his flocks, he went forth in the name of the Lord of hosts, and with his sling and his stone laid the giant prostrate. So you may see that youth, at first timid, now ready to stand by the right and resist the evils that meet him. A short time ago he concealed his religion; now he is ready to declare with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Before, he followed the practices which prevailed around him and the customs of his companions, without inquiring whether they are in conformity with God's law or not; now, he is firm in resisting the evil, and very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. Only a few years ago he may have shrunk from every proposal fitted to further the cause of Christ, provided it was likely to expose him to odium or reproach. You laid before him a way of doing good, but he saw a thousand difficulties in the way of its execution; it might lose him the good opinion of an influential friend or bring him into trouble. But now he is ready to listen to, and eager to pursue, every project fitted to restrain evil and to promote the cause of religion and morality. Wherever there is a true work I believe it will be thus progressive. "God will carry on the good work which he has begun, until the day of Jesus Christ."

We shall discover a further and more striking proof of this as we look to the *third* incident in the life of Nicodemus.

### III.

Again the curtain drops, and months elapse before we hear any more of the Jewish councillor. During this time he may have suffered not a little persecution, owing to the suspicions raised against him for the part he had taken. But his faith was now strong; it could bear the trial, and was strengthened

by it. The wind that might blow out the feeble spark may only fan the stronger into a flame. In the providence of God he was now separated more from the world, and made to depend less on man and more on God. In this way he was prepared for a yet greater trial before him.

Everything indicated that the earthly course of the new teacher who had appeared was drawing to a close. He had fulfilled the time appointed in the counsels of Heaven, and his work was about to be completed. The stratagems of the rulers were laid more skilfully, and the people who had stood by him, now abandoned him when they found that he condemned their worldly expectations as well as the pride of their rulers, and that the kingdom he was to establish and the blessings he was about to bestow were spiritual. When he told them plainly that unless they ate the flesh and drank the blood of the Son of man they had no life in them, from that time many went back, and walked no more with him. There is a strange combination of powers against him. An apostle is bribed to betray him. The grand council of the nation, headed by the high priest, condemns him. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, when appealed to, refers the case to the people, who demand his crucifixion. Every voice is raised against him, and they continue to rail against him in his dying agonies, when the vilest malefactors have had sympathy expressed in their behalf.

The circumstances are still more trying than those in which he had formerly been placed in the Sanhedrim. At that time, if he was opposed by the rulers, he had the great body of the people to support him; now he stood almost alone. The very disciples had fled in his hour of trial, and only one had the courage to come to the foot of the cross. A few pious women scarcely observed by the multitude remain to do the gentle offices to the dead.

How is Nicodemus to act now? Does he, as at the first, conceal his faith; or does he content himself, as in the second instance, in uttering a protest in behalf of innocence and against injustice? No; he is now ready to brave every peril. A friend, Joseph of Arimathea, begs the lifeless body of Jesus, and Nicodemus joins him in preparing it for the sepulture. Far above the fear, far above the applause of men, these two join in their becoming offices. It would be difficult to find in history a courage superior to that of Nicodemus. There may be a nobler valor than even that of the soldier in the battle or that of the sailor in the storm. When Luther defended himself before the great emperor of his age and a council of princes and prelates, an old general grasped him by the hand and said, "I have fought in the hottest battles of my time, but I have never after all shown a bravery like yours." The valor of Nicodemus was of a higher order than that which faces and fights with

the danger: it was so ardent that it did not see the danger; he was, in fact, utterly unconscious of it. You need not tell that mother that she is exposed to infection as she sits for days and nights beside the sick-bed of her son who is in raging fever; she will not heed what you say to her. So the Jewish ruler, as he pursued his work of love and duty, did not feel, he did not for one moment think of, the opprobrium he might meet with; his was "the perfect love that casteth out fear."

Observe the growth in the character of this man. At first believing but fearful, he became faithful, and now his heart is filled with love and animated by courage. He has reached the highest excellence of Christian character, to that charity which is the fulfilling of the law and the bond of perfectness, which is greater than faith and hope, and shall be laid up as the fruit in the garner of God when all else, like the leaves which nourished it, has disappeared.

So, Christian brethren, be not contented with past attainments. "Besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." The true Christian does not allow himself to think that he has attained, or that he is already perfect; but, forgetting the things that are behind, he presseth forward to those that are before.

Mounting towards heaven, he is drawn the faster the nearer he approaches it. He may not be perfect, but he is seeking to be perfect. A good soldier of Christ, he will not cease from the contest till he has conquered all those sins which are Christ's enemies and his own enemies. But do I hear some one becoming weary in well-doing, and asking, How long am I to continue in the contest? I answer, Till you have slain the last of our spiritual enemies. But if it is objected that this must be till death, then I say even till death you must continue faithful. The Christian dies in armor, as we have heard of the warrior dying in the battle at the moment when his troops were raising the shout of victory. He dies like Samson, amidst the glories of his strength, and he slays in his death the last of his spiritual enemies. The last sound which he hears on earth is the clang of arms in the final contest with sin, as the first sound which he hears in heaven is the song of triumph. "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb that was slain."

## MOSES' DYING REFLECTIONS ON MOUNT PISGAH.

"I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there" (Deut. xxxiv. 4, 5) as compared with, "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Numb. xx. 12). It went ill with Moses for their sakes, because they provoked his spirit so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."—Ps. cvi. 32, 33.

MOSES was now one hundred and twenty years old; he had run his allotted course, and his sun, looking larger and brighter as it set, was about to sink below the horizon. In the chastening dispensations of Heaven he was not to be allowed to tread the dust of that sacred land towards which he had been travelling these forty past years. But God, who mingles mercies with his judgments, was to grant him a favorable view of it. He was instructed to ascend that mountain range which stretches through Moab, to the highest peak in it, "unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah," and there to behold the land and then die. As he stood on this height he had behind him the wilderness, the

place of his wanderings, of his joys and his sorrows for so many years of glorious privilege mingled with the sharpest trials; and before him, across the valley of the Jordan, which lay almost at the foot of the mountain, he saw facing him the long-looked-for land of Canaan, with its romantic hills and its fertile plains and its populous cities. His reflections must have been such as are wont to pass through the mind of every Christian pilgrim as he feels his earthly career drawing to a close, and has a glimpse of the glory to be revealed. We invite you this day to ascend Mount Pisgah with the Jewish law-giver and prophet, in order to witness the instructive sight, and engage in reflections suited to the place and the time. As we stand on the imposing eminence, let us always attend first to the position, and what we may suppose to be the thoughts of Moses, and then to the lessons which we may gather as pilgrims heavenwards.

### I.

#### MOSES HAD AN OPPORTUNITY OF LOOKING BACK ON HIS WILDERNESS JOURNEY.

And what a number of thoughts, some of them joyful, some of them sorrowful, all of them solemn, must have risen up as his mind wandered back over the scenes of the past! I have been told by one who was all but drowned on the ocean, that in the brief space which intervened between the time in which he realized the full danger, and the unconciousness which

followed, he saw at one brief but comprehensive glance all the leading events of his past life as if the book of God's remembrance had been spread out before him, with its forgotten incidents as it were written in letters of fire. Such a canvas may have been spread out before the aged prophet as he sat with undimmed eye upon that mountain. His memory indeed did not go back to that scene of his infancy when he was exposed among the flags on the banks of the crocodile-haunted river; but his earliest recollections may have been of the story as told by the sister who watched for him and the kind benefactress who relieved him. And then there would rise before his mind that training, not without its profit, in all the learning of the Egyptians, and that better profit which he had from a believing father's counsels and a believing mother's prayers. He might next hear the cruel lashing of the taskmaster and the groaning of the bondsmen; and he would have a momentary glimpse, as if by sunlight streaming through the clouds, of that courageous step which he was enabled to take in casting in his lot with his afflicted brethren. Then he would see himself leaving behind him all his brilliant earthly prospects as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and hastening to bury himself in that solitary desert, and seating himself by the well where it was appointed by Heaven that the partner of his future life should meet him, and feeding on the mountains the flocks consigned to him for long but not unpleasant or unprofitable years. Then he would

remember the bush-burning, and the call of God, and the return to Egypt; and he would hear pealing on his ears the echo of the awful plagues which compelled the tyrant to let go his grasp, and the terrible cry at midnight when the first-born was slain in every house, and have before him the flight in the morning and the eager pursuit, and the last view of Pharaoh and his host sinking like lead in the waters. Next he would have a vivid view of the bare desert, but with the manna lying on it, and the stream which the rock had yielded winding through it; and the bold mountain, even Sinai, with the thunders and lightnings and the tempest, and the voice of God proclaiming the eternal law. He would follow the onward march, with the pillar of cloud shading them by day and ever kindled into a pillar of fire by night; and there would rise up before him the murmurings and rebellion of the people, and he would perceive them driven back from the very borders of the land into which they might triumphantly have entered. A tear for the moment may have dimmed his eyes as he thought of the strife at Meribah Kadesh, and how he himself fell into the sin for which he rebuked the children of Israel; and he would see the road, winding, crossing, and recrossing, by which he had conducted them these thirty-eight years through the waste-howling wilderness. But can this scene, which may have passed before him in a briefer period than I have taken to describe it, be a reality, or is it only a vision seen in the mists of the mountains? A reality it was,

and a reality it is, for good and for evil, in the influence which it has left ; for by this circuitous way has he been brought to the very borders of that country which he sees across the Jordan, — which he sees, but which he is not allowed to enter.

Now it may be profitable, with God blessing it, for all of us thus to survey human life behind and before us. The young man just setting out on the journey may find it a good thing thus to look at and study the map which the travellers, inspired and uninspired, who have gone before have sketched of that country which they have themselves to traverse. It would dissipate many an illusion which the youthful fancy is drawing, and save from many a bitter disappointment, thus to view the reality which is awaiting them. Let them know and believe and realize, that while there are enjoyments numerous and varied in human life, there are at the same time hard duties to perform, and sifting temptations to which if they yield it will be to subject them to trouble for years, perhaps for a lifetime. Let them be told how large a portion of human life is through a desert with the bare sand and fearful pits all around them, and how sure they are to wander if they do not attend to the cloud raised in the heavens to guide them by day, and the light kindled in the sky at night. Let them know that if they follow the Heaven-appointed path, they will at last be conducted to the land of uprightness ; but let them know that if they fall short of this through unbelief they must suffer the disastrous consequences which

shall pursue them as avengers appointed by God, like the diseases which strewed the desert with the carcasses of the children of Israel. By attending to lessons given in the Word of God and by the wise and good of all ages, they will be saved from much disappointment and much sorrow, and be better able to profit by privileges and the training vouchsafed to them.

It may be profitable, too, to those farther advanced in life, in the midst of the journey to ascend such an eminence, when God allows it, and to take a retrospective survey of the country which they have gone over, and thus be in better circumstances to realize what is before them. Does not God supply us with a quiet Sabbath, for this end among others, that from its holy height we may get a Pisgah view of the past and of the future! Does he not from time to time lay us on a bed of weakness that we may calmly survey the past, see it as it were from above and from a higher region, see it as it is, and not as it appeared in the bushes and confusing brakes through which we have had to find our way in the bustle of business? And how can those who would bring forth fruit in old age be so profitably employed as in gathering lessons from their past lives, from their own experience and the dealings of God towards them, and taking a view across the valley of the pleasant land that is now lying immediately before them?

II.

MOSES WAS NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER THE LAND.

"I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there." There must, I suspect, have been a sentiment of sadness, not only when he cast his eyes behind him, but when he surveyed the scene before him. For had he not regarded that land with brightest anticipations for many long years, in the midst of the oppressions of Egypt and the toils of the wilderness? It was the land of his fathers, the land promised to their children, the land to which he had been conducting the people; and no doubt he looked towards it as the exile does towards his native land, beloved by him all the more that he is away from it. And it is doomed that he is to die there in sight of it, but without being permitted to set his foot on it; he is to be cut off at the very time when the people are ready to cross the Jordan and enter triumphantly into possession. Is there not, as it were, a feast placed before him without his being allowed to taste of it? "Why," he might ask, "are there hopes kindled in me only to be quenched in darkness? The very riches of the country described as a land flowing with milk and honey, and where one may wash his robes in the blood of the grape, only add to my disappointment as I am made to feel that I can never enjoy

them. 'Surely the vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: the grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter.' " Such thoughts may have risen in the bosom even of the meekest of men; and he may have felt like the mariner, who, after successfully buffeting every storm and escaping every rock, is at last wrecked on his native shores where friends are waiting to welcome him.

Brethren, we are thus reminded of the important truth that there is no lasting peace, no thorough soul satisfaction to be found in the objects of this world. I am not to indulge here in empty declamation against the good things of this present life. I have heard James quoted as if he said that "money is the root of all evil." My friends, money is not the root of any evil; but "the love of money may be the root of all evil." So far as health and strength, food and raiment, home and friends, wealth and influence, comforts and elegances, and beauty in sky and earth, in creature inanimate and animate, in plant and animal, in man and woman, are esteemed as gifts of God, so far they are good in themselves and good for us; and he that morosely or monkishly condemns them and speaks against them may be contemning the works of God, which are to be used as not abusing them; to be employed in the service of God, and to be enjoyed with grateful and loving hearts. God does not so adorn the lily of the field that we may depreciate it, but that we may consider it and love the Maker of it. But when we put that creature in the room of the

Creator, when we set our heart on the gift and neglect the giver, when we expect to get soul contentment and abiding happiness from any of the objects of this world, then are we breaking the first commandment; we are placing other gods before the living and the true God, and encouraging hopes which must terminate in disappointment and misery. I am not recommending you to undervalue the gifts of God, but I am warning you against cherishing the belief that they can give true peace and contentment to fill and satisfy the soul.

If we stop ourselves at any given moment and ask if we are perfectly happy, we shall be obliged to admit that there is something wanting. But then we deceive ourselves with the hope that what we have not secured we may yet obtain. Only let us acquire some more acres, only let us add a little more to our present stock of wealth, only let us have this further enjoyment and gain this further honor, and then we expect to have unbroken happiness. Only let this threatening cloud be scattered, and we hope for unending sunshine; only let us climb this other height, and we are sure that the long-looked-for scene which is to satisfy our souls will burst upon our view. Now, these are the expectations which I wish to check, as it is certain they can never be realized. For, first, it is not by any means certain that we shall obtain further accessions of the objects we are in search of. The storms may descend ere we reach that other height which we

have been eying with such eagerness. The clouds, threatening new storms, may return after the rain. Instead of the cup being filled, it may be dashed in pieces before our eyes. And secondly, on the supposition that we gain what we have been seeking, what reason have we for thinking that the new objects would be better than the old? The young and inexperienced may imagine that in the distant spot on the landscape on which the sun is shining there must be a paradise still lingering on our earth; but when they go to it they find it very much like the other parts of the earth's surface. Often in sailing the rough ocean have I imagined that away in the horizon there is an unbroken calm; but on the vessel reaching the spot it has turned out to be agitated and distracted like the place from which I surveyed it. After we have got what we wished, we are obliged to say, What is all this to me as long as something else is denied? What are all these honors to me as long as Mordecai the Jew sits at the king's gate? The serpent which entered the garden and succeeded in tempting our first parents is still lurking amid the flowers, and may spring up at any time to sting and to poison by crosses and temptations. The conqueror wades through blood to gain the laurel crown, only to find how rapidly its leaves wither on his brow and become an incumbrance. In regard to not a few of our enjoyments we are made to see that after the rose has blown away the thorn remains. We gather round the imposing show as children do

around the blaze of crackling thorns, only to find how speedily the flame dies down, and that only ashes remain. We quaff the bowl, to experience that the dregs are bitter. Cease, I beseech you, from these pursuits, which are as vain as the chase of the boy after the rainbow which he never reaches, or after the butterfly which he catches only to destroy. Man's soul, formed at first in the image of God, and yet with immortal desires, can be satisfied with nothing else than with God, and will die without reaching peace if he sets his affections on anything lower or earthly.

### III.

#### MOSES WAS NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER THE LAND BECAUSE OF SIN.

We have the occurrence fully recorded in Numbers xx. 7-13. From this account it appears that Moses had hastened to the rock under the influence of that impetuosity which, I rather think, was natural to him, rather than the meekness and patience which he had acquired by the grace and discipline of God. The command was to speak unto the rock before the eyes of the children of Israel, in the assurance that waters would come out to give drink to the congregation and their beasts. Moses did indeed obey the command in a way; he gathered the people together, but he addressed them in a harsh manner: "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you

water out of this rock?" And instead of speaking to the rock in simple faith he smote it, and smote it twice. As the Psalmist comments (Ps. cvi. 32, 33), "They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips." The origin of the sin is traced to unbelief: "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." In short, he here for once fell into the very sins of unbelief and impatience for which he had so often rebuked the people; and so God, who is no respecter of persons, declared that he should not have the honor of conducting them into the land, because "ye sanctified me not in the eyes of the children of Israel."

The incident has its lessons. "It is only one sin," we hear persons saying when they are charged with their iniquity; "it is only one sin. It is naught; it is naught." Such persons may wonder that one sin should have kept Moses out of Canaan. But God would thus show us how grievous every sin is in his sight. He who commits one sin is guilty of all (James ii. 10); has broken that law which is holy, just, and good, and every precept of which is binding upon us and cannot be disregarded with impunity.

We see how apt sin is to remain within after we thought it had disappeared, and to break out when

it is least looked for. Little perhaps did Moses think that the natural vehemence of temper, the unbelief and the impatience which he had taken such pains to subdue, would ever appear again ; and yet they here burst out in the view of all the people. When evil habits have been formed, they will ever tend to impel us in the old ways. Passions and lusts that have been fondled will ever strive to regain their ascendancy. It is thus that we have seen one who was long a swearer, but who had abandoned the practice, at times giving way to profanity under the influence of passion ; thus that we have seen the old sore of licentiousness which had been skinned over again bursting out in unchastity ; thus that we have seen the very converted sinner returning to his cherished sins "like the dog to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to its wallowing in the mire." God by exposing Moses to this discipline shows how great the evil and the danger involved in thus allowing spiritual enemies to lodge in our hearts, whence they may break forth at any time for robbery and pillage and conquest.

The same lesson is taught us in the providence of God. The declining life of many is imbittered by sins perpetrated it may be many years before. How often has the dissipated, the licentious man to carry about with him a broken constitution ; and the man who has been guilty of cunning and deceit is exposed for life to suspicion and odium ; and the unfaithful father or mother has to bear

the torments of rebellious or prodigal children. Even when none of these effects follow, there is the scandal of the offence in the eyes of our fellow-men: "because ye sanctified me not in the eyes of the children of Israel." The very people of God have to bear for years, perhaps all their lives, the influences and the effects of sins which have been repented of and been forgiven. Ah, my friends, unless these sins of ours are blotted out by the blood of Jesus, they will follow us farther than the hour of death; they will add one other pang to the pains of dissolution; they will be found written as with indelible ink in God's book of accounts, to justify him in pronouncing the sentence, "Depart into everlasting fire!" Sin kept Moses from entering the land of Canaan, but it is keeping multitudes from an infinitely higher blessedness; it is preventing them from entering the heavenly Canaan.

Under the last head I showed you that the believer is not to expect pure and unmixed happiness on this side the grave. Many are willing to acknowledge this truth who are not prepared for the further and the deeper one that all this arises from the influence of sin. For, first of all, these trials are the fruit, directly or indirectly, of sin. By sin death entered into our world, and with death all our other woes. When persons are in health and in possession of the necessities and some of the comforts of life, and with the members of their family and their friends in the same position, there is no reason why

they should not be contented. But the fact that even in such circumstances there are anxieties and fears is a proof that there is something troubling us. That which thus disturbs us is no doubt an accusing and unappeased conscience speaking to us in the name of God and telling us that we are sinners, and along with this desires which are craving and are never satisfied. We say, "Peace, peace," but there is no peace; for how can there be peace when the soul is not at peace with its Maker? We gratify the desires only to find that they crave the more. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, nor the ambition with success, nor the lust with gratification; but each in its own voice is crying with the daughter of the horse-leech, "Give, give!" This is the worm which corrupts the gourd of our prosperity. And these disturbing causes can never be removed except by the blood which speaketh peace, and by the sanctifying power of God's own Spirit. Sin is thus directly or indirectly the cause of our never being able to enter upon perfect peace. Not that our trials and sufferings are to be regarded as necessarily the punishment of any one sin, or even as the punishment of all our sins, or indeed as the punishment of sin in any sense. They may be sent not so much to punish as to purify. I have no doubt this last trial was laid on Moses to complete the work of discipline, and fit him for immediate entrance into glory. You may, I dare say, have wondered why the dying Christian is often kept so

long on a bed of languishing and distress. Why is the body so tortured with pain? Why is the whole frame so feeble and emaciated? Why is the spirit so sunk and depressed? Why is the soul, which immediately after death is to be admitted to the fulness of joy, not allowed a more agreeable passage to it? Why is there not a peaceful advance to perfect enjoyment as the dawn gradually brightens into the morning; or rather why are not the spirits of good men carried at once to heaven, like those of Enoch and Elijah, without tasting of death? An answer can be given to this question which ought to be satisfactory. There is some remaining sin which needs to be once more corrected, some Christian grace yet feeble which needs to be called forth into full exercise. There is yet some stain upon the loveliness of the soul before it is fitted for those mansions into which there can enter nothing that defileth.

#### IV.

##### MOSES WAS PERMITTED TO OBTAIN A VIEW OF THE LAND OF PROMISE.

There may have been a feeling of pain called forth by the scene, but surely there must have been much more of pleasure. Though one hundred and twenty years old, his eye was not dim, and what a wide and rich view was spread out before it! On the right was the rich pasture of Bashan rising upwards to the rocky

and yet grassy mountains of Gilead, extending on to Dan, the northern boundary of the land, the view being bounded by the lofty mountains of Lebanon, with their snowy tops glistening at that season in the returning sun of spring. Turning round from the north towards the west, he had more immediately before him the portion allotted afterwards to Naphtali, and then the rich plain of Esdraelon, and the territories which fell to Ephraim and Manasseh; and beyond he got a glimpse of the utmost sea, over which the sun set. Farther south there was in the distance the hill country of Judah, where David afterwards fed his flocks, and immediately below him the Jordan rolling its waters, swollen by the melting snow, onward to the Dead Sea, and beyond it the city of Jericho embosomed in palm-trees, on to Zoar on the lake, and the wilderness beyond. The ascent must have been made in our February or March, the most agreeable season which that region furnishes, and the one which travellers choose for visiting the country. We have nothing exactly corresponding to it in our land, for it combines some of the features of our spring with some of the peculiarities of our early autumn. It is described in the Song of Songs: "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." And contemporaneous with this, the grain which had been sown

some months before was waving in the fields, and beginning in the earliest spots to whiten unto the harvest. But it was not the mere beauty and magnificence of the landscape—though these must have been relished to the utmost by one who had so exquisite a poetical taste—which imparted to it its highest attractions in the estimation of Moses. He valued and rejoiced in it more as the land which God swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it to thy seed; as the land to be speedily possessed by the people for whose benefit he had toiled; as the land in regard to which his own prophecies had been uttered; as the land big with the destinies of the world; as the land in which there was to arise that seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; as the land in which the prophet like unto himself, and greater than himself, was to appear, and to whom the people were to hearken. Never did any exile long banished from the land of his fathers experience such an emotion of delight in beholding once more his own country and visiting the spot in which he had been brought up. It may be doubted whether any earthly scene ever awoke so deep a feeling in any human bosom as this Pisgah view did in the breast of Moses.

I have been calling upon you to reflect under a former head that the objects of this world cannot satisfy the soul any more than the wilderness and its wanderings could satisfy the Israelites. Yet there was a rest provided for God's ancient people which

one generation failed to obtain by reason of unbelief, but which was gained by the next. So there is still a rest remaining for the people of God. There is a rest remaining for them; as we shall see forthwith, in heaven. But there is more; there is a rest for them in this earth. Indeed, unless we lay hold of this rest on earth we shall never be drawn up to the rest in heaven. Our distractions in this world, we have seen, proceed from sin; but there is a rest remaining for the sinner even in this life if he will but enter in. There is the rest from a troubled conscience, the rest from the wrath of God, the peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ on the one hand satisfies Divine Justice, and on the other pacifies the conscience, and is thus called expressively his peace-speaking blood. Then again there is the peace produced by the spirit of Christ, the peace effected in our spirits by the oil of the Spirit poured on the troubled waters, the peace of a sanctified mind, the great peace of those who love God's holy law, the peace of spiritual-mindedness. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." This, I say, is a rest provided in this life. We enter into it by faith, for "we who believe do enter into rest;" and men fall short of it only through unbelief. God does not indeed give his people absolute rest in this world; this he reserves for another. "This is not our rest, for that it is polluted." The storms may often be raging around them; but as the sailor in the tempest casts out anchor and keeps his place till the winds have spent their

fury, so they who have hope as the anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, being fixed on that which is within the veil, though they may be moved, are "not much moved," but are enabled to keep their place, and are ready to start with the first favorable wind of heaven. And there are times when for the encouragement of his people God gives them foretastes of glory, refreshing as the cluster of grapes brought from the riches of the land to Moses in the wilderness. On the quiet and peacefulness of a Sabbath-day, as we engage in prayer or meditation, nay, at times in our solitary walks as we muse on divine things, we find that the fire burns, and we are made to feel that God is near and that heaven is in view. Or at our sacramental seasons he takes us up as it were to his holy mount, and meets with us, and causes us to exclaim, "It is good for us to be here." Or when two or three Christian friends are conversing of Jesus, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, suddenly he joins them; and though their eyes are let so that they do not know at the time that it is the Lord, yet they are made afterwards to exclaim, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way and opened to us the Scriptures?" My friends, we live beneath our privileges; we fall short of them through unbelief. At the feasts of the Jews, which were regulated by the moon, persons were accustomed to ascend the mountains, to see the earliest beams of the rising luminary, and proclaim to the dwellers in the towns and villages below that the season of joy

had come; let us from time to time ascend such an elevation, that we may anticipate some of the blessedness of heaven and receive some of its light on our spirits, to rejoice in it ourselves and call on others to join with us. If we had but sufficient faith we might ascend the top of Pisgah, to behold the land of promise lying before us.

V.

MOSES ENTERED AT ONCE INTO THE HEAVENLY  
CANAAN.

After he had seen all the land, "Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there, according to the word of the Lord." No man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day; and this, no doubt, lest the people whom he had such difficulty in keeping from idolatry in his lifetime might have fallen into it after his death as they paid pilgrimage to his tomb. His spirit sank behind yon mountain-top, that all men might look after it into the region to which it had gone. No departure, not that of the sun sinking in his splendor, not that of Elijah in the chariot of fire, could have been grander and more sublime. He had seen the land, and knew that God's promises were true; and in the last lingering look towards it he may have seen by faith the people entering it in triumph: and so he died, like the warrior, in the midst of the excitement of the battle, but with the certainty that the victory

was won. When the aged Simeon received the child Jesus in his arms, he exclaimed, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation;" and such may have been the exultant feeling of Moses as he turned his eye away from the earthly to look towards the heavenly scene. The earthly Canaan, the last object seen by him on earth, faded from his vision, and the heavenly Canaan opened upon his view, and he gazed with still undimmed eye upon "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month," joining the fruits and riches of harvest with the buds and hopes of spring, and beyond the throne of God, towering high above, and firmer than the everlasting hills; and the whole shining in a light before which the light of day grows pale. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Verily God gives more than he promises; he had said, "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." But he did go over thither, for his spirit crossed at once the Jordan that lay between, and the earthly passed away like night before the light of the morning, to show him the heavenly, — the reality of which the other was but the shadow.

In contemplating such a scene, I dare say the wish now in the hearts of many is, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Ah, that was the prayer of one who died the death of the wicked! But that inheritance reached by Moses is also yours. It lies before you if you have faith to see it, if you have only faith to enter in. But "let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Our Lord said to a certain young man, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven;" and yet it does not appear that he ever entered it. Ah, there is something peculiarly melancholy in the case of those who thus perish within reach of safety, perish like the shipwrecked mariner who had reached the shore where friends were ready to receive him, only to be sucked back by the recoiling wave. Ah, there are many such, I fear, among professing Christians! They seem to be out of the house of bondage, and to be journeying on to the land of promise; but by a strange infatuation they never reach it, for they wander all their lives in an intermediate wilderness, sometimes sending out a stray messenger to spy the land of milk and honey lying before them, but at other times longing for the pleasures, the flesh-pots of their former state, and dying, after all, when they have only obtained a distant prospect of it, having seen enough to make them long for the rest and security which it affords, but enough also to make them regret that so much has been lost by them.

The boy imagines that he would be nearer heaven if he stood on that mountain which cleaves the sky than he now is when he stands on the plain below. But truly, if we but think it, heaven is as near us here as it ever can be on earth. We may even now, and this by simple faith, enter into possession of the promised blessings which are free as the air of heaven around us. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "We who have believed do enter into rest."

## IN THE RESURRECTION SAINTS ARE AS ANGELS.

They are as the angels of God in heaven. — *MATT. xxii. 30.*

**T**H**ERE** are few or none who do not entertain some hope of attaining the blessedness of heaven. Believers in Christ, and they alone, are entitled to cherish this hope; but multitudes are clinging to it without ground or foundation. Many altogether unfitted for the holiness of heaven are yet cherishing the hope of securing its happiness. The man of lively fancy delights to picture a scene of grandeur for which, alas! he is making no preparation. The idle sentimentalist dreams of unmingled joys for the enjoyment of which the state of his affections altogether disqualifies him. The disappointed man, on being frustrated in some of his schemes of ambition, cleaves to the hope of heaven; but only till such time as his earthly prospects begin once more to brighten, when his courage returns, and he sets out as eagerly as ever in pursuit of aggrandizement. He who is racked with pain will look to heaven as the termination of all his agony, even when he has no reason to think that he has acquired a heavenly temper. It is astonishing to observe the

complacency with which many who have never lived the life of the Christian will yet look forward, when on a dying bed, to his joys. Few, indeed, are so hardened as to be able to part with this hope, and to contemplate their souls either as being utterly annihilated, or as consigned to the place from which all light and joy are forever shut out. Some, it is true, were they only free from bodily pain and insured of success, would be contented to live here forever amidst all the pollution that abounds. But the living—the wicked, as well as others—know that they must die. They know it, they cannot but know it; they are reminded of it every time they feel the symptoms of weakness or decay in their own persons, every time they hear of the death of a dear friend, every time they see the long funeral wind away to the place of the dead. Seeing, then, that they must soon be cast out of the troubled ocean of this world at any rate, the most thoughtless and abandoned would at least wish to have a haven of rest on the shores of eternity.

And would we damp these glowing hopes, these bright anticipations? Would we unmercifully eradicate all such wishes from the heart? Are the lively fancy and the deep sentiments of man to be bounded by the confines of time and of this world? Are the disappointed to be consigned forever to darkness, without a gleam of hope to lighten their path or cheer their spirits? Is the sick man, tossed on a bed of distress, to be allowed no hope of a respite? No, my

friends; so far from trying to keep you from looking upward and onward to heaven, we would rather seek to give it a prominent place, and fix your eye more steadfastly on it as the goal which you are ever striving to attain. But then we would have you take proper and enlightened — that is, scriptural and spiritual — views of the nature of heaven, and of the joys which God has there prepared for his chosen people. Let all, even the wicked, think much and often of heaven; but let them think of it as it is, — as the abode of a holy God, as the dwelling-place of holiness. If the unconverted sinner but think of its real nature, he would see clearly that a man must be born again before he can enter the kingdom of God. Were the believer habitually to entertain exalted views of the spiritual joys of heaven, he would find that while his hopes were not thereby rendered less lively, they would have a greater tendency to purify him even as heaven is pure.

Now, we find much that is fitted to throw light on the joys of heaven in this declaration of our Lord. It seems that the Sadducees, who did not believe in the doctrine of the resurrection, in their anxiety to entrap the Saviour had constructed an elaborate, though withal an exceedingly flimsy and superficial, argument against the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. They supposed that a certain woman had married seven successive husbands, being all brothers, and that she had done so in obedience to the law of Moses, which enjoined that when a

husband died without issue his brother should marry the widow. Having conjured up this case, they ask triumphantly, Whose wife shall she be of the seven? Our Saviour does not deem it worthy of him to examine narrowly this weak and quibbling objection; but he gives a direct and a sufficient reply: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God; for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are as the angels of God in heaven." It is as if he had said, Your objection proceeds upon unworthy, earthly, sensual, unscriptural views of the nature of heaven. Heaven is a place of pure acts and exercises and elevated enjoyments, where the saints live as do the angels, in the presence of God.

### I.

#### IN HEAVEN THE SAINTS ARE HOLY AS THE ANGELS ARE HOLY.

We have no very particular account of the nature or of the occupations of the angelic host. We are made acquainted with their existence, not in order to gratify an idle curiosity, but to quicken our graces and to provoke us to love and good works, that we may through grace attain the same lofty character. All that we read of them is fitted and intended to show that they are exalted spirits of spotless purity. They are called expressively "the holy angels." They have never been stained by ini-

quity in sentiment or in act; if they had, they would have been cast forth from the mansions of purity to join the condemned spirits in the place prepared for the Devil and his angels. Man no doubt differs from angels in this respect. He has through sin fallen from communion with God and from the companionship of angels and pure spirits. But we are now to show that it is the grand design of the gospel to raise man from his first estate and make him holy as the angels are holy.

In going back to the original state of man we find that God made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and with honor. But man, being in honor, abode not, but brought himself into a condition of pollution and condemnation. Now, it is the grand aim of the redemption purchased by Christ to remedy the effects of the fall and bring man back to his original condition. The gospel system announces itself all throughout as a remedial system, — remedial of the evils which sin entailed. By the redemption, God's chosen and called ones are saved both from the power and punishment of sin, — both from its pollution and its guilt. The guilt, the debt, the sentence of condemnation is blotted out by the blood which cleanseth from all sin, and the sin itself is taken away by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. And this work of renewal or sanctification goes on till it is complete, and until all sin is wiped away. We have no reason, indeed, to think that any mere man has arrived at

perfection on this side of death. But while the believer in this life is not perfect, he is going on towards perfection, and he reaches it at death.

To whom, then, are the portals of heaven thrown open? To none but those who are without spot and blemish. Their state and character are at once described by the apostle when he speaks of them as "the spirits of just men made perfect;" that is, they are justified persons (for so the phrase "just" is to be understood) in whom the work of sanctification is made perfect. Not indeed that our righteousness or perfection can give us any claim of merit or reward, or any title whatever to heaven. This can be procured for us only from a source altogether independent of ourselves, — only from the righteousness and sufferings of Christ. But it is not in the least inconsistent with this statement to affirm that perfection is necessary to fit us for that holy place; or, as the apostle expresses it (Col. i. 12), to make us meet "for the inheritance of the saints in light." It is justification by the righteousness of Christ which gives us the title; but it is perfection by the spirit of Christ which gives us the meetness. No others than the spirits that have been made perfect can be admitted into heaven. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth."

Let us then, my friends, when we would think of the perfect happiness of heaven, think also of its perfect holiness. Let us not put asunder the things

which the Lord hath indissolubly joined together. One reason why it is a place of perfect happiness is, that it is a place of perfect holiness. Wherever there is sin there must be more or less of misery. With reverence be it spoken, were sin introduced into heaven it would stain all that is pure, mar all that is beautiful, degrade all that is grand. It would be a jarring note in the melody, and henceforth all could not be peace or harmony or joy. Let us, we repeat, when we think of heaven think of it as a place of spotless purity. If we do so, we cannot meditate upon it or realize its presence too frequently.

But is it not too common among us when we think of heaven to think only of its joys and its pleasures? When the unconverted think of it, they think only of its loveliness and its splendor, its rest and its calm, its rivers of pleasure and its fulness of joy. They think not of the source of these joys in a holy God, and of the holiness of nature which the enjoyment of them presupposes. This is the reason why so many who will never reach heaven are yet in the time of disappointment and in the hour of trial clinging to the hope of it. They look upon it as a rest after labor, as a termination to all their trouble, as a quiet haven in which their bark may rest after being tossed by winds and waves in a lengthened voyage. While God's people do not overlook this view of heaven, they regard it also as a place free from sin. One reason why the believer longs so much for heaven is, that it is a place of holiness. When in this

present world, he feels not only the burden of pain and fear and anguish; he feels still more, and above all, the load of sin. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened;" and the chief part of our burden is this, that sin is still cleaving to us and oppressing us. One chief reason leading the believer to long so much for the mansions of light is, that there not only all sorrow and sighing, but all sin and pollution flee away. He hopes not only for an end to all his cares and privations, not only for a blessedness such as he hath never been permitted to enjoy on earth; he hopes that, being freed from all evil dispositions and the sins which beset him, he shall be holy as the angels are holy.

## II.

IN HEAVEN THE SAINTS, LIKE THE ANGELS, SHALL  
ENGAGE IN BECOMING ACTS AND EXERCISES.

I say *acts and exercises*, for while heaven is to be a place of rest, it is not to be a place of idleness. This is another very prevalent mistake among professing Christians: they look upon heaven merely as a place of repose after labor,—like the slumbers of night after a day of activity. If we examine the common apprehensions of heaven, we shall find that they contain more or less of this idea. But by thus conceiving of heaven and representing it they strip it of much of its loveliness and attractiveness to nobler

minds. By shutting out all idea of exercise and variety and action, and above all of benevolence and usefulness, they leave little to engage the mind and draw our affections towards it; heaven thus comes to be looked upon as a place of dulness and of weariness. But heaven is no place of indolence and lethargy; it is not a place of idleness and of uselessness. An eternity of sloth would be an eternity of irksomeness. Better surely were it that the soul should sleep forever with its partner the body in the darkness and unconsciousness of the bed of the grave, than that it should be conducted to a place where there is life indeed, but without motive or activity, and where existence would be a tedium and a burden.

In heaven the saints are to be as angels, and angels, we know, are active in the service of God. We know that the fallen angels are active, ever going about like wild beasts seeking souls as their prey; and we have no reason to think that the holy angels are less active. They are the choir of the sanctuary above, where they sound the praises of God, and they rest not day nor night (mark this, they rest not), as they cry, "Halleluiah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" Nor is this all: as servants of God they have offices to perform in the worlds which God hath created. Their very name, angels,—that is, "messengers,"—shows that they are sent on high and holy missions. They are represented as having numerous wings: with twain to cover their face and feet in holy adoration and reverence, they have twain wherewith

to fly on the execution of the good purposes of God. Now they stand in the courts of heaven, making the air fragrant with the incense of their prayers and melodious with the sound of their grateful praise; and now they travel with messages of great joy to some being or world placed in the outer regions of space. In particular, angels are represented as executing many of God's purposes towards his church. Flaming cherubim turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life in Eden. Angels brought messages to the patriarchs. They delivered Lot from Sodom, and Jacob from Esau, conducted Gideon to victory, executed the vengeance of God on the armies of Sennacherib, delivered Daniel from the lions, and the three children of Israel from the furnace; they announced the birth of the Baptist; they saved Peter from the Jews, and instructed Paul before his shipwreck; and, more honorable still, an angel announced the birth of our Lord to Mary. Angels ministered to Christ after his temptation, and again in his agony; and they rolled away the great stone from the tomb where Jesus lay, and they were privileged to announce that their Lord was risen. They are still ministering spirits, sent to minister to all them who are heirs of salvation; they carry the spirits of the departed to the bosom of Jesus. An archangel's trumpet shall sound when the dead rise from their graves; and angels shall separate the good from the evil at the day of judgment. At the resurrection the saints shall be as angels, and we may

therefore conceive them as engaging in similar works and exercises.

*In particular, the saints, like the angels, engage in singing the praises of God.* In several parts of Scripture the veil that separates this world from the next is partially withdrawn, and we get glimpses of the glory which is afterwards to be more fully revealed. We are by these inspiring visions carried up in the spirit into heaven, that we may bask for a little, and for the refreshing of our souls, in the light and radiance of these upper regions, and hear at least the echo of their music. In almost every view presented, angels and saints are represented as joining together to praise a common God and that Eternal Word through whom God is manifested (Rev. v.): "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Nor do they ever become weary in this service; their hearts are in unison with their song, and ever as they behold and know more of God and of the Lamb they find new themes of praise and new matter for wonder and for thankfulness.

*Further, the saints, like the angels, are engaged in contemplating the works of God, and especially his wonders in Providence and Redemption.* Angels are repre-

sented as deeply interested in the observation of the works of God's hands. It was their privilege to sing the anthem of creation. "The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God did shout for joy." Their lofty spirits are engaged in contemplating the higher wonders of redemption. When the disciples looked into the tomb of Jesus they saw two angels, one standing at the head and another at the foot. Ah, it was an instructive place, that empty tomb of Jesus! Well might the disciples look into it. Angels were there before them; angels who had been in heaven were learning instruction on earth, and they were learning it in a tomb! These things the angels desire to look into. One of the grand objects contemplated by the incarnation of Christ was to the intent that unto angels and principalities and powers might be made known the manifold wisdom of God. They look with interest on the progress of the gospel on earth, and "there is joy in heaven among the holy angels over every sinner that repenteth." It seems only reasonable to suppose that the saints in light will be employed in a similar work of contemplation. Every faculty which God has given will there, matured and purified, be acquiring high and ever higher knowledge. They will now see in the light of heaven the meaning of those dark dispensations of Divine Providence which seemed so inscrutable to them on earth. They will now comprehend by brightened mental powers those parts of the plan of redemption which before seemed wrapped in

clouds and mystery,—a work this in which they may engage throughout eternity, and ever be discovering some new proofs of Divine wisdom and goodness throughout a wide-extending universe, or in the ever varied and ever bountiful manifestations and dealings of God, anew and anew unfolded.

*Yet further, in heaven the saints, like the angels, are engaged in works of love.* The angels, we have seen, are actively employed in the service of God. God gives his angels a charge concerning us, and they have various offices of ministration to discharge for Christ and for his church. And if the saints are to be like angels, we may conceive them to be similarly employed; and Christ no doubt has a work for them to do and ready for them in those many mansions of his Father's house which he is preparing for them. The whole method of the Divine procedure, so far as it comes under our view, seems to be carried on by a system of means or instruments. God fulfils his purposes by agents employed by him who are blessed themselves and conveying blessings to others, who are happy and diffusing happiness. Even in inanimate creation on earth we find that nothing is useless; everything has a purpose to serve: the stone, the plant, the animal, every part of the plant and animal, has a purpose to serve; it may be an end in itself, but it is also a means towards another end. The ear aids the eye, and the touch aids the ear and eye, and every member aids every other; it is good in itself,

and is doing good to others. But these inanimate objects perform their work unknowingly, unconsciously. It is different with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. They perform their allotted work knowing what they are doing, and blessed in the doing of it. Every being in glory will be engaged in a work suited to his gifts and tastes. Here a seraph, which signifies "fire," will be engaged in a work of fervent love; here a cherub, which signifies "mind," will be engaged in a work of lofty intellect. And in the resurrection saints are to be as angels, and will doubtless have deeds of intelligence and deeds of love to perform.

It doth not indeed appear what we shall be; but this we know, that in the resurrection the souls of the saints shall be clothed with bodies. These bodies shall not be like the bodies which they wore on earth, liable to disease or weariness or lassitude or fatigue. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and a spiritual body." We read of bodies terrestrial and of bodies celestial, and in heaven our bodies shall be after a higher model, "spiritual" and "celestial." It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but being planted in the likeness of his death, we shall also be planted in the likeness of his resurrection, and when he appears we shall be like him; our bodies shall then be fashioned like unto his glorious body, which we may conceive to be the most sublimated, flexible, and obedient

form of matter or material agency. Modern science shows us how much material agency can do. Take, as an example, the electric telegraph, which is every day carrying messages past your place. A methodical action is performed at one end of a wire, and in a few moments an intelligent communication is given at the other end, hundreds of miles away. It is a proof of the capacity of body. We know that our Lord's body after his resurrection appeared and disappeared, and acted no one could tell how. But in the resurrection our bodies will be like his, spiritual and celestial. They will therefore be fit ministers to the perfected spirit, — not, as here, hindrances at times, but always helps, and ready to fulfil the will of the spirit. *Here* the weariness of the spirit proceeds very much from the weariness of the flesh; but *there* the willing spirit will have a ready frame, and the unwearied spirit will use the unwearied body in unwearied work, and both, with the bloom and vigor of immortal youth, will be employed forever in the service of God.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we believe, that every faculty, every gift, every acquirement, every attainment, will be employed, — not idle or running to waste, but employed in the service of God, — of a wise God, who will allot to every one his suitable work, the work for which he is fitted, for which indeed he has been prepared by his original talents, his acquired accomplishments, and all the training through which he has been put in life and at

death; of a good God, who employs his creatures in doing good, and makes them happy in doing so; so that all their work is doubly blessed,—blessed to the doer, and blessed also to those for whom it is done.

How blessed are those who cherish the hope of reaching this place! The hope will purify them, even as God and heaven are pure.

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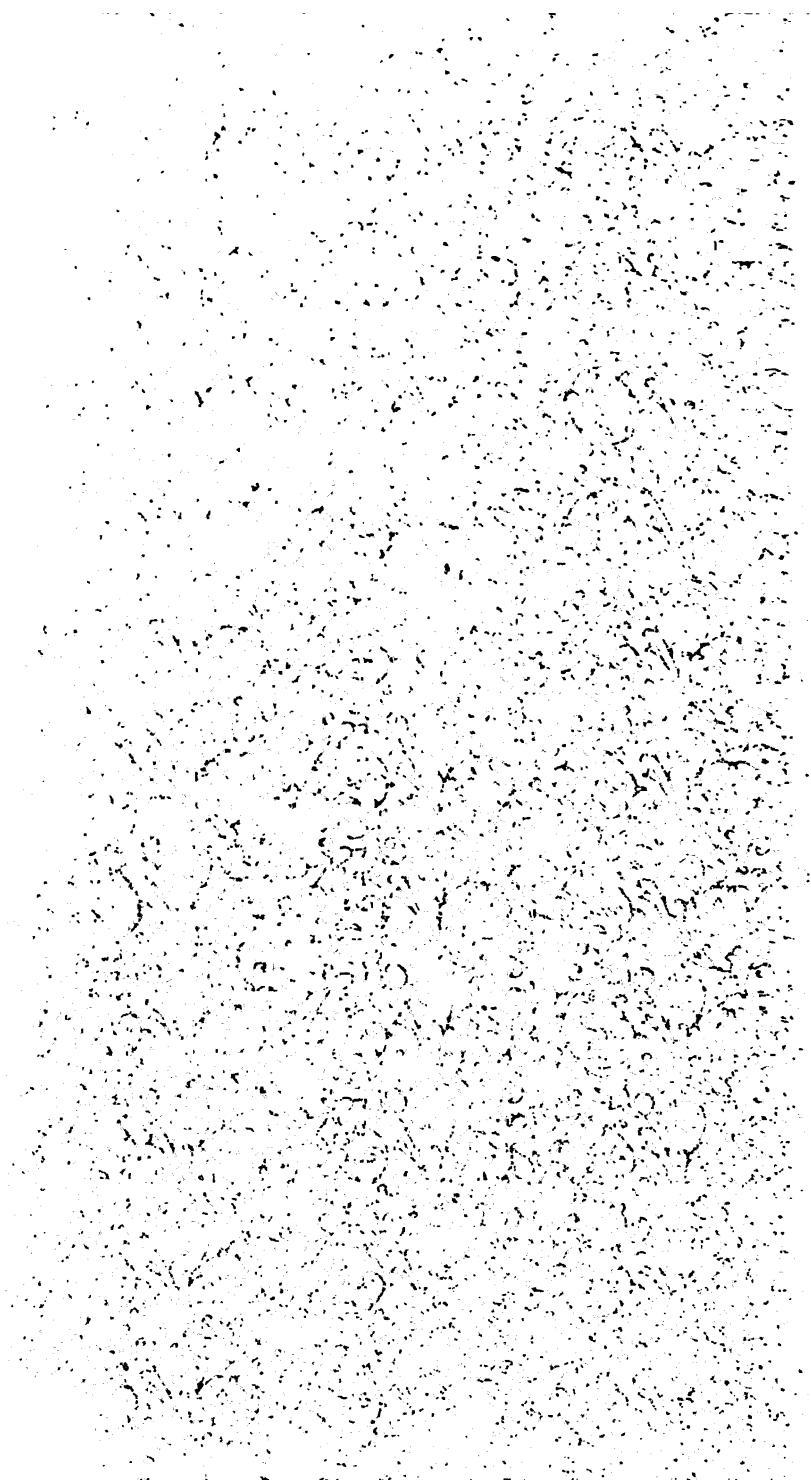
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